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COCKBURN OF ORMISTOUN'S LETTERS  
1727-1744

MARCH 1904







JOHN COCKBURN OF ORMISTOUN

*from a portrait presented in 1898 by Miss C. Dick-Lauder  
to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*

LETTERS OF  
JOHN COCKBURN  
OF ORMISTOUN  
TO HIS GARDENER

1727-1744

Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by  
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EDINBURGH

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Portrait of John Cockburn of Ormistoun from a  
 portrait in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

## INTRODUCTION

### ORMISTOUN AND THE COCKBURNS

OF the many branches of the old Border family of Cockburn<sup>1</sup> that of Ormistoun finds in the author of these letters its last noted representative. The barony, which had come into the family in the fourteenth century through a marriage connection with a Lindsay of the Byres, another and more famous barony in the neighbourhood, was sold by John Cockburn in 1747 to the then Earl of Hopetoun, and now belongs to the Marquis of Linlithgow. This sale must have been a pathetic blow to many hopes—for Ormistoun was as much to John Cockburn as any Abbotsford to the hand and heart that had striven and lived for it. Retiring in 1744 from a post he had long held as a Lord of the Admiralty, and busied with the building of what is now Ormistoun Hall, girt with the garden and the trees he had so lovingly tended, he had to give up the battle within sight of victory. His closing years were spent under the roof of his only son, George, of the Navy Office, and there he died in 1758,<sup>2</sup> the year of the birth of Nelson, at the age of seventy-nine. He inherited his 'ruling passion' from his father, Adam Cockburn, Lord Justice-Clerk under Queen Anne, and on the commission that reported severely on the Glencoe Massacre. In the 'Fifteen he earned much ill-will for severity in dealing as a judge with the rebels who

<sup>1</sup> The name is, throughout the Letters, Cokburne. Defoe (*Tour*, first edition, 1725) says, 'as commonly express'd, Coburn.' Heraldry, in its usual fashion, places three cocks in the family shield as an obvious emblem. But old names of good families are, as a rule, place-names. Cockburn was more probably the Gowk-burne, or well of the Cuckoo. Cf. Pen-i-cuick and Cock-pen.

<sup>2</sup> The obituary notice in the *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1758, says: 'At his son's house at the Navy Office, London, John Cockburn, Esq., eldest son of Adam Cockburn of Ormiston, Esq., late Lord Justice-Clerk.'



were tried before him. John sat in Parliament from 1707 to 1741. Had he been half as much interested in Walpole's long administration and the ways of his fellow Scots members amid their novel surroundings as these letters show he was in manure, and onions, and turnips, and trees, and the canna-be-fashedness of his tenants, he might have filled now a notable page in British history.

#### THE OLD HOUSE OF ORMISTOUN

The approach crosses the Orme, a tributary of the Tyne, which it joins below the village, and, rising to the top of the south bank, leads westward alongside the river dean known as the Glen, which the old house faces. This position, on a bank overhanging a river hollow, is a characteristic site for an old East Lothian mansion—witness Seton, Winton, Saltoun, Yester, Biel, and Whittinghame. This ancient home of the Cockburns is now a gaunt, featureless, two-story block, in rear of the modern mansion, and is remarkable only for a low-arched<sup>1</sup> main doorway, at the left side of which is the grated window of a small chamber that formed the temporary prison of the martyr George Wishart. Earl Patrick, father of the Bothwell of sinister aspect and unhappy memory, had seized the preacher at Haddington, torn him from his devoted pupil, Knox, and under promise of safety conveyed him by Ormistoun to Elphinston Tower, standing a grim peel on the ridge to the north across the Tyne valley. Here waited Cardinal Beaton for his victim. The Cockburns had been staunch for the English and reform party. According to tradition, Wishart had often preached under an old yew-tree which is now the most notable object at Ormistoun. This tree is mentioned in a document of date 1474, and still bears witness to its remarkable age. From its gnarled bole rise great

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<sup>1</sup> The doorway is only four feet seven inches in height. The window is two feet two inches by two feet. There is no sculpturing or any ornamentation on the front. It is now used as a tool-house and wood-store.

corrugations of the stem, supporting a dense mass of branches that sweep the ground and form an arbour two hundred and thirty-eight feet in circumference. John Cockburn casually alludes to it. 'By east the Yew Tree,' Bell is 'to thin out many of the fruit trees now for their thickness hinders their bearing.' It now forms the chief ornament of the flower garden, a bit of ornamentation which the practical Cockburn deemed superfluous, for in all the correspondence flowers are never mentioned. Some time after 1816, when the dowager Lady Hopetoun came to reside at Ormistoun, she enlarged his modest mansion of 1745, and formed the parterres at the expense of his beloved garden.

Mr. John Hamilton, head forester on the estate, has secured for me a manuscript which throws much light on the garden and its history. It was put together in 1816 by the gardener, James Smith, at the request of Sir George Mackenzie of Coul.

'Ormiston Hall, in East Lothian, is situated near the western confines of the county, and twelve miles east by south from Edinburgh. The only garden here prior to 1770 was the old one near the mansion-house. It cannot be ascertained when the garden was made out, but from a date<sup>1</sup> over one of the doors it must have stood one hundred and eighty years. The first trees for this garden had been selected with great care from the cider and other fruit districts, and was probably the best sorts then cultivated in the island.<sup>2</sup> The trees grew to a large size, and produced very abundant crops, so much so that about 1740 several

---

<sup>1</sup> Over a gate entering the garden is a stone with an inscription, thus :—

S	D
G.C.	M.T.
1636	

It refers to the great-grandfather of John Cockburn, Sir George, and his wife Dame Margaret Touris, of the old family of Touris of Inverleith.

<sup>2</sup> It will be a surprise to many to find such evidences of culture as gardens in Scotland early in the seventeenth century. In the *Privy Council Register* a complaint is dealt with (1621) under the Act against destroying trees, to the effect that 'men broke down the dykes of the orchard [garden] of Lethem at night replenisht with plenty of fruit of all kyndis, growand and hingand, climed trees and shooke down the fruit and broke the branches.'



attempts were made to make cider. This old garden was originally an oblong square, laid out in the Dutch style with grass walks, and divided into squares by holly and yew hedges. Betwixt the above square and the court of the old mansion is another oblong,<sup>1</sup> about half the size of the former, which had been occupied as a bowling-green about a century ago (1716). It still retains the name. The first repair in the garden was in 1775, when the old wall running from part of the old mansion towards the old Isle' (aisle=old church) 'was taken down and rebuilt with hewn stone. In 1789 the noble proprietor removed the decayed hedges, took up the grass walks, widened the borders, introduced gravel walks, and laid it out in the modern style. The Belsis<sup>2</sup> garden was laid out and the walls built in 1770. . . . The ground at the back of this garden (in which stands an old pigeon-house) was taken in in 1800. . . . The yew-tree<sup>3</sup> in 1816 measured 12 feet 7 inches in circumference at three feet from the ground. The late Sir Andrew Loudon [Lauder] Dick<sup>4</sup> of Fountain Hall (in the immediate neighbourhood) 'used to measure the tree for a number of years, and from several observations found, in 1810, that it increased yearly in circumference about three-quarters of an inch.'<sup>5</sup>

Immediately to the west of the garden, and completely hidden within a grove of giant trees, the growth of two

<sup>1</sup> With this should be read letter p. 52, beginning 'The large prickly Cucumber,' upon which it throws much light. Cockburn calls it 'the lower garden,' and refers to the bowling-green. What he calls 'the Closs,' too, is the court referred to above, and immediately behind the old house. The bowling-green served as an open-air drawing-room in the seventeenth century mansions. See also 'the little garden,' p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> 'Belsis,' so often mentioned in the letters, could not therefore have formed any part of Cockburn's gardening. His dovecot was not here, but in what he calls the 'Pidgeon field,' now Dovecot park, immediately south of the garden.

<sup>3</sup> In 1792 (*Statistical Account*) it girthed 11 feet, was 25 feet in height, and covered, it was guessed, a twentieth of an acre. Mr. Hamilton finds it now (1903) girths 15 feet 9 inches, is 36 feet high, and, along the line where the outside branch touches the grass, measures 238 feet.

<sup>4</sup> On the succession of his son, the well-known Sir Thomas, the name was changed to Dick-Lauder. A right-of-way to Fountainhill still exists, through John Cockburn's 'Big Wood.'

<sup>5</sup> This rate of increase had been maintained 1792-1816, but had it gone on till now, the girth should have been about eighteen feet. The tree is, however, still vigorous. There is a similar tree in size and form beside the old Douglas Peel at Whittinghame, also historical, for tradition says that under its gloomy shade the murder of Darnley was plotted.

centuries, stand the ruins of the pre-Reformation church of Ormistoun, approached, according to old accounts, through the laird's garden. It must have been in use in Adam Cockburn's time, and in John's boyhood, for the present edifice was built in 1696. There John must have been baptized, after a short journey through the 'closs' and the garden, and, in due course, catechised by the famous divine, John Cockburn, D.D., who entered minister of the parish in 1683, closing a romantic career as rector of Northall, Middlesex. Like his fellow Aberdonian, Bishop Burnet, Presbytery was always obnoxious to him. John thought of the old church only as a mark for his planting. 'Don't forget,' he tells Bell, 'supplying the Large Elms and also Chesnuts and Oaks in the Old Churchyard' (p. 78). Burial-places used to be secularised without scruple. Of the old church of Ormistoun we have only a beautiful arch in what remains of the south wall and the chancel, both covered with an evergreen pall of ivy. Here too are associations with Knox. On the north wall of the chancel is a monumental brass<sup>1</sup> to the memory of Alexander Cockburn,<sup>2</sup> a pupil of Knox, and a lad of great promise, but he was cut off in early life. His mother was Alison Sandilands of Calder, another family closely associated with the reformer. The upper part of the tablet has a Latin elegy extolling the lad's virtues, written by George Buchanan. Knox had tutored him along with the two sons of Douglas of Longniddry, another of the reforming East Lothian families. To these pupils Wishart referred when he parted with Knox, telling him to go back to his bairns, as one was enough for a sacrifice.

#### THE CORRESPONDENCE

The Letters represent but a part of John Cockburn's correspondence. They are contained in a well-bound quarto,

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the very few to be found in Scotland. Its date is 1563.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Cockburn was son and heir of John Cockburn, who led a strenuous life as a co-worker with Knox. The lad was for a time with his tutor in the castle of St. Andrews when besieged by the Regent Arran.

carefully transcribed in a modern hand. A thorough scrutiny of the language shows that the transcript has been faithfully made; but where and by whom there is no evidence. Their present appearance is due to the lucky accident of my having found them carefully preserved by Mr. John Hamilton, who had rescued the volume from a mass of unconsidered trifles awaiting the fate of rubbish. He most generously placed the volume at my disposal, after a cursory reading had shown me its novel interest and importance. To him the Society is deeply indebted. The reader will see that there are many gaps in the correspondence, which Cockburn seems to have worked at in season and out of season, both at home and on a journey. To Bell he commends his example: 'If you'll write as you see I do as I can get five minutes, you'll be less liable to forget,' a frequent failing of the gardener's. His industry as a correspondent is portentous. No. VIII. runs to ten pages of print, four hundred words to the page. No wonder these worthies were able to listen to long sermons. Communication was easily kept up with Haddington, where the postmaster handed over the Ormistoun letters when any one went in on market-days. At Tottenham or Hampstead, where the writer lived, a penny post and a foot post twice daily to London—once called upon to wait till a letter was ready—were established. All the letters but one are addressed to Charles Bell, gardener. There are letters, one or more, for every month of the year, July excepted, and for the years 1727, 1734-5, 1739-44. The correspondence must have been continuous, except for the writer's occasional visits, so that the leakage has been great. A few letters are undated, and these have been dealt with in the notes. Cockburn also carried on at the same time a much more extensive correspondence with his trusted adviser, Alexander Wight, so often mentioned here. Brown of Markle, near Haddington, first editor of the *Farmer's Magazine*, published (vol. v., 1804) the two articles on John Cockburn, which up till now supplied all the information



available regarding the work of this man as an agricultural pioneer. He gives only two letters, out of many, to Wight (August 1725 and December 1726), and these and the articles should be read by every one interested, as they supplement the correspondence now published, a correspondence which throws a flood of light on the little-known subject of the rise of modern agriculture in what has ever since been the premier district of Scotland, as well as on the social development of the villager, the gardener, and the country gentleman.

#### A MODEL SCOTTISH LANDLORD

The Ormistoun of two centuries ago presented the usual landscape of the time. The upper lands were heath-clad moor, perpetually grazed by half-starved cattle; the hollows by the river-side undrained marsh, from which, in dry seasons, some poor hay was secured as the only winter fodder available. Ten crofters near the village held patches of arable infield in run-dale or long narrow strips, on which crops of bere, oats, or pease were raised in succession till a year in the natural dress of weeds gave repose. These crofters were the kindly rentallers of the barony, tenants at will. Bell's father was one of them. What Cockburn thought of their farming comes out in this to Bell about his father's land, 'His Husbandry goes no further than to gett bad grain one year and worse the next' (p. 17). On the south side of the Tyne were four farms, and on two of these Adam Cockburn made the novel experiment (1698 and 1713) of granting long leases, and this at a time when farmers were too poor and too suspicious to take such a risk. It was a period, too, of political ferment and widespread poverty. This pioneer lease-holding farmer was Robert Wight, of a family long settled on the lands. An ancestor married (1559) a daughter of John Cockburn, the reformer. Alexander Wight, mentioned above,

was Robert's son ; and succeeding to the leases on his father's death (1734), he became, more than ever, an ardent and intelligent improver under guidance of the laird. We hear much of him in the Letters, both as correspondent and fellow-improver. These leases virtually made the holders perpetual feuars,<sup>1</sup> and as the total value of the estate was not great, John Cockburn and his father certainly belied the 'grippy' and shortsighted character usually attributed to men of their class and time. See, for a conspicuous case of his fairness, p. 76. Defoe, writing in the Union days, justly ascribed the miserable plight of the Scottish peasant to the mediæval system of land tenure which prevailed. John Cockburn, in a letter to Wight (1725), puts his views as a landlord in terms greatly to his credit. 'I hate tyranny in every shape, and shall always have greater pleasure in seeing my tenants making something under me which they can call their own than in getting a little more myself by squeezing a hundred poor families till their necessities make them my slaves. I hope my actions have convinced you of all this, and that I have hitherto studied your advantage equal at least to the making the estate better to those who shall come after me, and I am sure much more than any advance of the rent to myself.' The wise benevolence of this model landlord comes out in a letter of 1726. 'My tenants are all interested in the future of the place as well as in the present, for your children will profit by your work. No father can have more satisfaction in the prosperity of his children than I in the welfare of those on my estate.' In answer to Wight's of July 16, 1725, he tells him that his turnips should have been hoed by leaving ten inches between every two—evidence of drill-sowing at this early date. Wight showed (1736) in Edinburgh a turnip thirty-four pounds in weight. 'You tell me you have enclosed

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<sup>1</sup> These leases, being contested by the Hopetoun family, were the subject of much litigation, beginning (1773) in the Court of Session, and ending (1865) in the House of Lords, which sustained them.

a garden,' a thing which only a laird then attempted. There follow useful hints not only for the farmer but for his good-wife. 'A garden will supply all sorts of roots and herbs. A neck of mutton in the broth with these and some slices of bread—all well boiled on a slow fire till very tender—forms a good cheap dish. A pound or two of beef will make it better. Instead of bread you may put in barley and half a handful of meal to thicken it.'

Before 1727, when the Bell Letters begin, the Wight correspondence in the *Farmer's Magazine* shows that Alexander had enclosed a garden, sowed rye-grass and clover, and grasses with wheat, feeding cattle and sheep on the grass. Cockburn writes to him—18th August 1725—from Tottenham, 'Your turnips ought to have been hoed ere this' (in drills, therefore, and not broadcast), and proceeds to give directions as to the hoeing, the laying out of the garden. Again, in December 1726, 'the profit from the one fourth acre potatoes upon the bad land opposite the church is so great, that I hope you will go on with them, especially as you find good crops of corn [barley] after them.' These dates for enclosing sown grasses, clover, drilled turnips and potatoes are in advance of what are usually given. Robertson, in his *Rural Recollections*, which dated from 1765, sets down the introduction of red clover from seed and of rye-grass to Thomas, sixth Earl of Haddington (d. 1735), and this on a very limited scale.

Equally novel was the work of Cockburn and Wight in enclosing by hedges of earth and quicksets planted atop, frequently discussed in the Letters. An excellent treatise on *Ways and Means for Inclosing*, ascribed to Macintosh of Borlum, was published by Freebairn in 1729; but the author had no means of giving effect to his instructions. With Cockburn these hedges were made to combine the useful and the ornamental, for he set them thick with white and black thorn, brambles, roses and honeysuckles, elder and privet, producing a most pleasing effect. Following, too, the example



he had seen in Herts, he planted at distances in the hedge-rows hard-wood trees. Of these the ash was the mainstay, as the most generally useful on the farm. The larch, the poplar, and the lime he never mentions.

Letter XXVI. shows what he regarded as the comparative value of forest trees (p. 77). He seems to have found the greatest difficulty in getting oaks and firs. Some fir seedlings he wishes Bell could secure: 'If you can gett such a thing for love or money gett it and soon.' He alludes more than once to a clump of 'old firs' behind the house, evidently Scots firs of the days before planting round mansions was thought of. Note, as showing the scarcity of timber, that he inquires what was done with a plank he sent from London.

But John Cockburn was not content with infusing enthusiasm on his own estate. He founded the Ormistoun Society<sup>1</sup> or Agricultural Club, which met in the village inn for discussion and mutual help. Brown gives the minute of the first meeting, 19th July 1736 (under John Cockburn's presidency), and the sixteen original members. The last minute is dated 4th May 1747. It had at one time one hundred and twenty-two members—landlords, tenant-farmers, and traders. From the list of members a few names may be noted, such as James Burnet, younger, of Monboddo, not yet the eccentric Lord of Session, and Maxwell of Arkland in Galloway, another pioneer improver. Four others—Robert Anderson, younger, of Whiteburgh, Colonel Gardner of Bankton, the Duke of Perth, and the Laird of Macleod—form an interesting historical group. To this chance association of the first two of them Prince Charlie owed his victory at Prestonpans (see General Cadell's *Sir John Cope*). Among the original members

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<sup>1</sup> This was not actually the first movement of the kind. In 1699 there was a Society of Husbandry in Clackmannan, but it was more of a benefit society (*Miscellany*, Scottish History Society). Maxwell of Arkland gives an account of a Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture which met in Edinburgh (1733). The moving spirit was Hope of Rankeillour, but Cockburn was a member.



is John's brother, Patrick Cockburn, advocate. On the parish register of Ormistoun his marriage to Alison Rutherford of Fairnielea is entered on 12th March 1731. She is known as the authoress of the popular later version of the 'Flowers of the Forest,' quite in the sentimental manner of her century, and for an interesting association with Burns and Scott. On the club, too, were Alison's father, Robert of Fairnielea, and her brother, Dr. Rutherford. In her *Letters and Autobiography* (T. Craig-Brown), she says, 'We lived four years with his' (Patrick's) 'venerable father,' that is, till 1735, when Adam Cockburn died. She nursed him in his Edinburgh house, and speaks of him as 'a man of fourscore,' which would make his birth soon after 1650. Cockburn-Hood (*House of Cockburn*) found him 'retoured heir to his brother John in 1671.' Our author, who was the second son, says elsewhere: 'I am now' (Jan. 1740) 'in my 61 year,' so that he was born in 1679. He is stated in the *House of Cockburn* to have been baptized 1698 and married 1700. The parish register at Ormistoun is unfortunately blank, 1649-1706.

## PERSONALIA

Cockburn came of a good Whig stock, modified by Anglican influence. Macky, the Hanoverian agent, drew up for the Princess Sophia (1723) a report on the Scots public men of the day, in which Adam Cockburn figures as keen for William and Presbytery, 'bigot to a fault, hardly in common charity with any out of the verge of Presbytery, otherwise very fine in person and manners, just, of good sense, sanguine complexion.' Singular that two such strong partisans and political opponents as Adam Cockburn and Fletcher of Saltoun were near neighbours and contemporaries. Both too had their most pleasing and enduring tastes for the rural amenities eagerly cultivated, in the one case by a son, our John Cockburn, in the other by a nephew, Lord Milton.

The portrait in the *Farmer's Magazine*, vol. v., of John Cockburn is from an original which was long in the family of Haldane of Gleneagles.<sup>1</sup> The Letters amply show that he inherited the most pleasing of the qualities Macky ascribes to his father. As a landlord he proved himself eminently just and considerate. At a time when precarious tenure and harassing feudal services kept the 'pure Commounis' in a degraded position, he was kindly and generous to a fault. We find that their services in the making of roads, which he might have claimed, he merely 'expected.' He grudges to hurt David Wight's feelings, and so advises Bell to avoid being seen again planting trees in his hedges. 'Make the hole and slip in the horse chesnut at once, for if David sees yow open new ground he'l think himself undone.' He is even patient when some rogues among them set fire to whins (p. 63) and pull up saplings, only threatening, in a Wight letter, to make use of his barony court in the way of punishing them. His thoughtfulness is unceasing. To Wight he says, 'To those born and bred on my own estate I always think I have a particular relation and a tie upon me to encourage, more than strangers.' Bell's brother, John, is a gardener in London (p. 51) and first of a long succession of Scots abroad in that line, and has had 'brother Adam' with him as a not very hopeful learner. Bell had himself been at Tottenham as a learner (p. 28). Brodie had learned joinering there, and then transferred his skill to Ormistoun. Alexander Wight was urged (1726) to come south and get insight into the malting business he was about to enter upon. 'I believe I can get you recommendations to several places in the north, about Stockton, in Yorkshire; you will find some very bad husbandry.' If he come to London, he 'shall be welcome to lodging.'

The reader will not fail to form an intimate picture of the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Cockburn, John's youngest brother, married the daughter of Haldane of Gleneagles, and his son assumed the name of Haldane. This lady is the 'Mrs. Cockburn' of the Letters.

writer from two aspects of the correspondence—the way in which he keeps Bell and his servants up to the mark and his severe handling of the unprogressive, prejudiced, and limited attitude of the people for whose benefit he was giving his right hand. Beautiful too is his self-criticism—his ironical deference to the judgment of others along with confidence in his own, his consciousness of elaborating his instructions to weariness, and the self-restraint in the confession, ‘I dare say no more for fear of getting into a passion’ (p. 95); or this bit of homely frankness: ‘I hate wrangling, and when I cant make a shoe do I choose in the easiest way to let it go down in the heel’—a surprising confession from a Lord of the Admiralty in the days of Pope and Addison. True ‘gentility’ breathes in this to Wight, ‘My wife returns thanks to yours for the receipt for making starch; and, as we are farmers here, she says there is no receipt which she, as a sister farmer’s wife, can return but she shall be glad to send.’ But the most abiding feature of the picture is the strenuous concentration of the man. These letters are a revelation of, in its own way, as interesting a personality as that more famous official of the Navy Office, Samuel Pepys. Bell is to give him a journal of what he does every day. He irks to know what his neighbour laird, Hepburn, thinks of his improvements. Every five minutes he has to spare he gives to Ormiston. Almost pathetic is this: ‘Last evening we had the finest soft shower could be and this a fine sunshine morning. It actually has made a great change upon the colours of the fields already, and it now gives me great pain only to be able to see the fields and the changes every day will make from my windows’ (p. 52). Concentration could hardly go further than this bit of unconscious humour: ‘Arch. Pringle, who has lost his wife, talks much of his Onion Seed, so I send you a little of it, to give it a fair trial’ (p. 50). Archie was another ‘brither Scot’ doing well on gardening in the south. Delicious, too, is the dry remark: ‘This has been



a clear, frosty day'—closing some plain speaking about 'unthinking stupidity.'

The frankness of his reference to 'my Wife,' and of his criticism of 'my Brothers,' shows how unsophisticated the Scots laird was, and how homely even in the ceremonious eighteenth century. See also p. 38, 'If Patk: asks you,' etc.

The footing on which his brothers stood, it is difficult to understand. Charles lived at, especially is much about, Ormistoun Hall, and, though John is said to have assumed the care of affairs in 1714, he writes, in 1735, the year of his father's death, as if the brothers were not seeing eye to eye with him: 'Borrow a cart from any of the Tenants for the Spars or any other uses without asking my Bror<sup>s</sup> for the least thing or taking any notice when you are to borrow one. None of the Tenants will refuse you one.' The year before this he is quite deferential on the subject. 'What I write is only my opinion to you, but doe you follow the orders you receive from my Brother, whether agreeable to what I write or not' (p. 3). The confidence he reposed in Bell is shown in this (p. 20): 'I need not tell you this letter is to yourself and the other to be communicated to my Brothers as usual.' The freedom of his criticism must have made Bell regard him as 'gey ill to do wi'.' Now it is, 'you shd gett better Ink,' for the very address was scarce legible. Again he gives a home thrust like this: 'Don't glance this Letter and then throw it by, as if saying you have read it was enough. Read and consider it over and over, for I can't have time to repeat the same things every Post'; 'What can I think of any other orders when what I have repeated a hundred times is not minded'; 'I can't have time to write ten times before I can know all the circumstances which a line or two more to your first letter w<sup>d</sup> have made me understand at once.' Bell is not spared even the shame of exposure, for in a joint letter to him and Dods we have, 'If he' (Bell) 'observes as overly as he writes, he had as good stay within doors.' He is so full

of enthusiasm that he can account for remissness in answering letters on two grounds only, little is done, and the less said about it the better, or 'as I write seldom you think you need neither be in haste in going on nor in writing, but drone on trifling away the season properest of all the year for business.' He forgets that the gardener, after his day's manual labour, and with but a modest share of clerkly skill, might find composition unkindly under such conditions as Burns has sketched:—

‘the spewing reek,  
That filled, wi’ hoast-provoking smeeek,  
The auld, clay biggin’,  
An’ heard the restless rotttons squeak  
About the riggin’.’

Behind all this arbitrariness, however, there must have been a real regard for Bell. He is at great pains in planning ways and means for improving Bell's position and prospects by market-gardening. The remarkable No. VIII. letter is almost entirely devoted to this. In a dark passage (p. 28), after such excellent advice as this—'Never grudge laying out a penny when you see a probability of 2d. returning'—he thus hints, 'When I see you next I shall possibly propose to you what may make you incline to reside there and do my business and push your own on strongly at the same time.' As he had been discussing how to cultivate a market in Edinburgh, the 'there' may refer to some scheme for doing business in the capital in which Bell and the village might share, 'for my chief view in the many advices I give to people at Orm. is to advance their own thriving.'

#### LANGUAGE AND STYLE

If the truest art is always that which comes nearest to self-revelation, then these letters come under the category, all the more that they are the artless outpouring of mind and heart full to overflowing with the subject. We have got far

beyond what Cockburn has to say of seeds, tree-propagating and planting, fruits and vegetables, poultry and pigeons. His wise remarks on nascent economics have an increasing interest to us, for the rural exodus, the village decadence, and the growth of home industries are living questions still. But behind all these are the man himself and the presentation through him of a notable phase in national development. He wrote at the time of that change in speech and writing which followed the Union, and nowhere can we get better material for its study. The language wants polish and knows no tricks of rhetoric, but there is no mistaking the meaning, provided we trust to the ear and not to the eye, for the punctuation seems to us defective. In this, as in so much else, we moderns are treated like children, thanks to the progress of book-making. There is no space to speak of the spelling, though it finely illustrates archaic survivals, inconsistencies, and all those features of the time which only accurate reprints show. But I must draw attention to a point now rarely presented to the reading public, the presence of what Scottish writers of the century dreaded under the reproach of Scotticisms. While Cockburn as an educated man—and he certainly writes like one, though true to the situation he makes no show of learning—would conform to English as he heard it and used it officially, there is no doubt he could scarcely avoid the homely ruts in writing to Bell. Thus while we have such usual forms of the period as ‘dонт, your’s, their’s, our’s, it’s growth, people’s living, Brodies friends, you’l, he’l,’ we have also specially Scots ones in ‘w<sup>ch</sup>, w<sup>t</sup>, acc<sup>t</sup>, agt (against), Brōr, coṃon, ane, ye (the) papers.’ More interesting are forms which are due to Scots pronunciation—‘ditchen (ditching), farthen (farthing), non (none), through (thorough), and hight—both with strong guttural, watter, jobb, halves (halves), espicially, rasberry, then (than), collyflowers, unsensible, closs, allers (alders), for fear of their middling with trees, leed (mill-lade), least (lest), Norraway, moneth (Ger.



*monat*).’ Such spellings, too, as ‘*moue, saue*’ show that the letters *u* and *v* were still treated as virtually the same. Peculiarly realistic is the Scottish emphatically pronounced negation, ‘No sure’ for surely not, and ‘Sure, sure, he is most obstinate.’ But a spelling of exceptional interest is ‘*fain*’ in the sentence (p. 100)—‘Let them (the cattle) stay there no longer than it is so, till 1<sup>st</sup> March, and then carry them to back Lee (*lea*) altogether, and *fain* that south of the Garden.’ The word ‘*fain*’ here is obscure. But ‘when,’ used here in the sense of ‘after,’ a common idiom, is in dialect pronounced ‘*finn*,’ so that the meaning is, punctuated to please the modern—‘and, when that is done, remove them to south of the garden.’ Initial *wh* is regularly an *f* in Aberdeenshire; in the Lowlands only ‘when’ is so treated. This is no more barbarous than the Englishman’s *wich, wot, wye, wen*; and much better than his attenuated ‘*oo, ’oose, ’oom*.’

It is easy to pick up or drop a pronunciation, but an idiom abides. In this regard Cockburn’s Scotticisms are most characteristic. His actual Scots words are comparatively few. They are: *frush*=easily broken, *bye times*=odd times, *knowe*=knoll, *overly*=remiss, *fend*=get along, *fale*=turf, *sods*. But one characteristically Scottish form is entirely absent. A seventeenth-century speaker would say ‘choakit’ where Cockburn has ‘choaked.’ If the suffix *-ed* forms a syllable it appears, but otherwise we have ‘*d*, a printer’s convention in verse, now happily disappearing. In the Letters, however, we have ‘straittened’ as well as ‘body’d.’ Under use of words note: ‘you have done (finished) about the house; you must be sensible (aware) there is a great deal to do; not one scrape (bit of writing) from Lowther.’ The same is true of phrases, *e.g.* ‘against May comes three years; between and to-morrow night; put work by (out of) hand; up the way (road); few breed by (in comparison with) what might have done.’ The adjective used as adverb was as common in Middle, and even in Elizabethan, English as it still is in German and Scots,



*e.g.* 'ne'er saw them *right* managed, *cheaper* made.' Examples too occur of a use of 'shall,' now regarded as specially Scottish, but quite common in English of an older day. A marked feature of Northern English, which includes Lowland Scots, was an apparent looseness in the use of plurals. Many examples are here: 'severals other<sup>1</sup> particulars; when you are in doubts; you was complained of to them as you know you was to me; money and time is lost.' The most interesting of all these idioms, however, is the omission of the relative in the nominative case, *e.g.* 'Alex. Cockburne's son and the man came with him; in a ship sailed yesterday,' and many others. Now in the oldest Scots, as in the *Laws of the Four Burghs*, the unemphatic relative 'that' regularly appears as 'at, and as regularly is heard in the speech of to-day. The slight stress on the word led to its being omitted. The ear of Burns must have noticed nothing amiss with this:—

'Or like the snow' [that] 'falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts for ever.' <sup>2</sup>

During the eighteenth century this became a familiar trick to give an archaic effect, as in the ballads, and no point so well supports, as this, Chambers's theory of the late and largely artificial presentation of this much debated literature. The unique value of the Letters in this regard consists in their showing, without suspicion of pose and without the intervention of the printer, how an educated Scotsman of the period wrote and spoke.

The Letters leave no doubt of the fact that Cockburn wrote and spoke English, and that plain farmers like Wight, and even Bell the gardener and Dods the ploughman, understood it. And yet we are told that the speech of Scotsmen,

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<sup>1</sup> 'Other' here is simply Chaucer's 'othere' and Shakspeare's 'other'—an old plural that has lost its unemphatic suffix.

<sup>2</sup> When Burns wrote these lines (*Tam o' Shanter*) he was not following what is a distinctively colloquial English use of 'like' as a conjunction, for Lowland Scots knows nothing of this.

like Cockburn, who sat in the English Parliament after the Union was a source of wonder and amusement to the Southron members; but after the example set before us this must be coloured with the hues of romance. Of course the oddities of accent and intonation must be taken into account as a factor in the amusement, but surely the indubitable provincialisms among the English members themselves would be as marked as any Doric. Though wordy enough, Cockburn is fond of elliptical compression and of what the grammarian calls the gerundial style. Two phrases from the same letter offer typical illustrations of the gerund subject: 'Their not doing this cleverly will lose him much of the advantage of what he has learned . . . to push it heartily in every part is wanting to bring it to bear.' Here is a striking case of compression: 'You have now had a trial of' [*what*] 'the Garden produces can best be disposed of.' If we compare Cockburn's language with that of Defoe in the letters he wrote about the same period to Harley from Scotland, it will be found to be quite as clear, natural, and idiomatic.

#### COCKBURN'S WORK AND PLACE

These Letters suggest much that might be said about Cockburn's contemporaries who were busy at work on lines such as he, and with very little effect beyond endangering their own fortunes, as befell him; much too, in themselves, they tell about modes of living and of making a living that what we call modern progress has removed far into the forgotten past. They illustrate, with a fulness unknown before, the picture of rural life which is presented in such publications of the Society as the *Court-Book of the Barony of Urie*, the *Masterton Papers*, and *Baron Clerk's Memoirs*.

The *Farmer's Magazine* gives 1726 as the date of the laying out of the village, but in the light of the Letters this is too early. 'If I can get a draught from Mr. Gordon, you'll have

much occasion for being at the Town of Orm:' so Cockburn writes to Bell from Hampstead, June 1735 (No. VIII.). This letter is the longest, as it is one of the most important. John's father died this year, and one can see onwards from this point a fever of development setting in, embracing dyke-making, market-gardening, bridge and road making, coal-mining, and, above all, improvements in the town. There is a hint also of friction between the new laird and his brothers. It is hard to say where Gordon came from, but he is a stranger in the village shortly before 1735. He was employed as a draughtsman. His name is on the Club List, but not as one of the original sixteen. But in August 1739, we have him about to be settled at Ormistoun, for his house is being roofed then 'before winter'; and again (p. 67, February 1741), its position is indicated. In 1742 (p. 80) Mr. Yool seems to be in charge, and Gordon is not again mentioned. But building operations are then under discussion, leading to the uprooting of cherished hedges and trees. We cannot, therefore, put the first mention of the laying out of the village earlier than 1735, though the phrase in a letter of December 1734—'I hope the Town is upon Improving'—seems to mark the inception of the plan in Cockburn's mind (see also September 1735). In No. XXVII. we have Cockburn's own advanced views on the subject, and this in October 1742. The idea on which Cockburn worked for the conversion of Ormistoun from the usual crofter-clachan of the period into a well-built market town was part of his long-cherished scheme for creating here a busy industrial centre. He did not, however, himself build (p. 33), but in every way encouraged his feuars to do so on their own ground, generously helping them with timber and stones (see p. 80).

The neighbourhood was already an attraction. Defoe was in Scotland for some years before and after the Union. In the first edition of his *Tour* (1725) Ormistoun is simply the seat of the Lord Justice-Clerk. The second edition



(1732) has 'Ormistoun, a perfect English plantation, curiously hedged and ditched, a fine old seat of the Cockburn family.' This is taken exactly, word for word, from Macky's *Journey through Scotland* (1723). Defoe's third edition (1742) speaks of the 'thriving little toon and handsome estate, so well planted and improved. I do not remember to have seen a more beautiful spot. A pretty good Seat here; but when I saw it, it was very much out of Repair,' a remark which explains the building of the new house about this time. As Defoe died in 1731 this is not to be taken as his own observation, but the *Tour* was kept up to date through the century in successive editions. These extracts, however, are all contemporary with the Letters, which they illustrate. The stranger enters the village now with pleased surprise at its well-built main street, the fine old manse garden, the stretch of green sward in the centre with its quaint worn cross, and the ring of noble trees in which the whole is set. How it looked near the close of the century (1792) is shown in the *Statistical Account*: 'Country enclosed with hedges of white thorn, mixed with sweet-briar and honeysuckle and hedge-row trees. Flax-dressing never succeeded.'

As representing John Cockburn's industries there were surviving, in 1792, two distilleries and a starch-work. His gardening, for which the valley is admirably adapted, was represented, when the *New Statistical Account* appeared (1841), by two vegetable gardens, which sent from two to three hundred Scots pints of strawberries in the season to Edinburgh. This fruit he never mentions. In our own day fruit culture and market gardening have enormously developed here since the railway came near the village. Cockburn was sage enough to see that the producer without a customer was nought, but he lived long before the age of Industrialism. His mill is now a dwelling-house and the lade dry. The bleachfield survived longest. Though we have been led to understand that, in the June days, 'lint was in the bell' all over old-time Scotland, Cockburn never mentions it. In a Wight letter he observes,

‘I cannot say that I know anything of flax by experience.’ It must have been grown by Wight, however, for he goes on to say, ‘I have always heard that the seed ought to be changed frequently. I therefore advise your getting seed from Holland, though your own may be excellent.’ This was in 1726, but we are not to infer that there was any bleachfield till much later. We first hear of it in 1733. Neither flax-growing nor flax-dressing is mentioned in the Letters; but the matter was taken up by the Club (1736-41), which petitioned the Board of Trustees to appoint a proper person from Holland for the industry. Accordingly, on the later list of Club members, we have Mr. Keysar, lint-dresser from Flanders. Along with him is ‘John Christie, linen-draper in Ormistoun,’ named in No. VII. as corresponding with Cockburn. This is early in 1735 (see note, p. 21). Lord Milton’s bleachfield at Saltoun is dated 1750 in the old *Statistical Account*, and generally regarded as the first in Scotland. But the Club minutes show that Ormistoun had an earlier start.

With Wight’s malt-making there is an interesting link that brings it almost to our own day. Robert Moffat, the African missionary, was the son of a revenue official stationed for a time in the village. His monument most fitly adorns the main street. If a prophet were ever honoured at home, John Cockburn, the maker of Ormistoun, would surely be also remembered here. A son of Isabella (Mrs. Begg), the sister of the poet Burns, was for a time the schoolmaster, as my friend, the Rev. Mr. Proudfoot of Haddington, has informed me. His mother, then a widow, lived with him, and also taught in the village. Gilbert Burns lies in Bolton churchyard, further down the Tyne.

While Cockburn must have seemed a trifle too opinionative in Bell’s eyes, his opinions were uncommonly sound. Nor is he unduly arbitrary. Resenting Alexander Wight’s failure in answering repeated inquiries put to him, he says: ‘I only mention upon such occasions what I think may be of service,

but I never insisted upon my thoughts being followed. I design them well, but I leave every man to judge for himself in his own affairs without censuring of them for not thinking in their own concerns as I do. If my advices are not liked the trouble that is lost is mine, and I shall always be glad they do better, without taking ill their not being of my opinion.' As an employer he was painfully alive to the weak points in the undeveloped industrialism of his country. To Bell he writes (p. 48): 'You know I have frequently complained of triflers and all being Idle, and that you take excuses not at all sufficient for their making little advance.' To similar purpose another letter says (p. 77): 'Attend you the Men close and make them work or discharge them. It is picking my pocket to make me pay Men that can't or won't work.' Evidently a century of the Catechism as the mainstay of education had not taught the peasant labourer to do justly. The real reason for such idling, however, was not lack of intelligence, for the people were shrewd enough. 'Our people,' he justly observes, 'proceed as half asleep without any lively spirit in contriving or executing, and I really believe much of this proceeds from our low diet both in eating and drinking. Our common food gives little strength to either body or mind, and our malt drink is the most stupifying stuff ever was contrived.' As a well-drilled official he would hustle the jog-trot peasant, who seems to have acted upon the Spanish maxim, 'Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow.' 'Delays,' he says, 'are the delight of people in Scotland . . . being punctual is a great sin in our country . . . doing things by halves.' He shrewdly sees that all these defects are great hindrances to business. The country was sadly in need of a substantial increase in the circulation of money, then both scarce and debased. One home industry—gardening—was practicable, but had to be created. The business views of his age, however, stood in the way. 'If you propose to follow your father's narrow, vastly



mistaken notion of raiseing ten cabbages and not disposing of them tho' in danger of rotting, unless he gets the price of 30 for them, you'l be in the right, provided nobody will raise cabbages but yourself, but this wont hold long, for the dearer you keep your price the more others will be encouraged to take up the business, which is the constant consequence of those foolish, narrow, low notions.' Here we have, in a nutshell, the soundest and most enduring business creed.

He must have been a considerable employer of labour. Directly, by his example and his favourable leases, he stimulated the farmers, and by his building and public works he made village life more comfortable. He secured for the community a trained joiner and trained gardeners. In his own dealings he is upright. His grazing must have been a novelty and his *advertisements* quite modern. These he insists on keeping to, not always realised now, 'making no particular promises about taking care of one man's Horse or the like, for I will have no distinctions, every poor man's horse to have the same fare with the greatest,' a rebuke for 'Blundering as last year about L<sup>d</sup> Oxford's stirks,' evidently a case of favouritism. Indirectly he runs counter to modern social propriety when he encourages Ramsay to set up 'a good publick House.' The type of the time he sketches sarcastically (p. 18): 'Our comon dirty Hog stays where nothing is to be gott but nasty Barm which we call Tuppenny and by accident ane Oat or pease Cake.' The success of the scheme was not great. In 1743 we find him reporting the complaint of a member of the club about the malt drink supplied by the Poosie Nancy of Ormiston. 'I suppose,' he says, 'she w<sup>d</sup> be glad of more custom, and yet she won't keep drink which w<sup>d</sup> bring her customers.' Evidently he thought the drink traffic ought to be encouraged, but, it must be remembered, with the view of stimulating the market for barley 'in so fine a Barley Country.'

So far we have seen this remarkable man mainly as most



of his contemporaries regarded such as he—a lucky placeman indulging in the luxury of an expensive and impracticable hobby. In justice to those contemporaries it must be remembered that he enjoyed opportunities denied to most of them in the matter of a safe income, the training in affairs on a large scale, the experience of a capital, relatively as great a school of enlightenment as now, and the general progress of a country that was a century ahead of Scotland. But his enthusiasm embraced wider interests than the care of his estate. He saw that the only stimulant to dispel the prevailing sloth, or rather apathy, lay in the creation of incentives to effort in local industries, new markets, and the healthy play of supply and demand. In his own fashion this correspondence reveals in him a phenomenal anticipation of Adam Smith. His views are far in advance of his day. No writer of the century gives so luminous and incisive a criticism of the Scottish peasant farmer before modern progress overtook him. Unfortunately he is in such deadly earnest that he can see nothing of the farmer's merits. In farming practice Cockburn had little to learn from us moderns, though our implements, our fencing, and our deep draining were beyond him. In forestry and gardening he is ingeniously suggestive. He has such unusual trees as silver and spruce firs, sweet chesnuts, oriental planes, evergreen oaks, and maples. He gets seed from France, Turkey, and Scandinavia. He says nothing of flowers, or of a greenhouse, but he has wall, standard, and espalier fruit trees; bell shades and hot beds; and uses mats to protect from wind and frost. He has the usual fruits, including even mulberries and quinces, but he has no strawberries. On points in which Scotland was long notably far behind he is stimulating to a degree, such as the entertainment for travellers in inns, the absence of fruits and vegetables, the low diet of the people and its want of variety, their underfed animals, their neglect of manure, and their mean and unsightly houses.

My obligations to Mr. John Hamilton I have already acknowledged; but I must add here that I have derived much help from his professional skill and local knowledge. The gardener, Mr. Bannerman, who takes an intelligent pride in his interesting surroundings, drew out a plan of the estate and garden, which has been of the greatest service to me in following the topography of the correspondence. For useful information about the Cockburn family I have to thank Mr. Robert Cockburn, 17 Great King Street, Edinburgh, descended from the Langton branch, and Mr. Harry A. Cockburn, of Lower Grosvenor Place, London, a grandson of the well-known Lord Cockburn of the delightful *Memoirs* and *Circuit Journeys*, and tracing descent from the Ormistoun branch. He contributes a new fact to John Cockburn's family history, to wit, that 'his second wife was Arabella Rowe,<sup>1</sup> daughter of a gentleman in Oxfordshire. Her two sisters were respectively Viscountess Hillsboro' and Charlotte, wife of George, Lord Forrester, so that George Cockburn (John's only son) in marrying Baroness (in her own right) Forrester married his first cousin.' Arabella Rowe's father, Anthony Rowe, is described as of Muswell Hill, now within the grounds of the Alexandra Palace; which gives plausibility to Mr. Cockburn's shrewd conjecture that John Cockburn got to know the family while he resided at Tottenham, in the neighbourhood. His first wife was Beatrice Carmichael, daughter of the first Earl of Hyndford,<sup>2</sup> by whom he had no children.

In the annotations I have endeavoured to deal with the great variety of topics raised, and their relationship to the social progress of the age. The difficulties of interpretation at this distance of time, involved in the character and occasion of the correspondence, may have led to errors both of

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<sup>1</sup> This lady is the 'My Wife' of the Letters.

<sup>2</sup> His brother was Mr. Wm. Carmichael, one of the cronies of Foulis of Ravelstoun, and 'the patron kind and frie' who lent to Allan Ramsay the Bannatyne Manuscripts for his *Evergreen* (1724).

omission and of commission. The Letters of course take no notice of the wider interests of the day except the phenomenal winter of 1739-40. But there are curious references to seed shops like Switser's in Westminster Hall and that of the dilatory Lowther; to the enterprising market gardeners and the higlers or costermongers; to the wheat-fields of Herefordshire and the well-planted lanes of Herts; to the clannish interests in the comings and goings of canny Scots; to the primitive arrangement of a foot-post that waited till a letter was ready; and of Craig, the waterman, letting Cockburn know when the 'Glasgow Packett' found the river open for the adventurous voyage to Leith; and to a commercial intercourse that could boast of Bills of Lading and Bills of Exchange.

A melancholy interest attaches to the following extract from *The House of Cockburn*: 'On the 10th Dec. 1747 was signed the disposition "by George Cockburn of Ormiston, whereby for the sum of £12,000 sterling he sells to John, Earl of Hopetoun, heritably and irredeemably, All and Whole the parts of the barony of Ormiston on the north side of the Tyne, comprehending the town of Ormiston, with right of weekly market, as granted to the late John Cockburn, his grand-uncle" (1649), "and an infeftment upon the whole barony—granted by John Cockburn, father of said George, to the late Charles, Earl of Hopetoun, for £10,000, of date 14th May 1739." By a second disposition, dated 8th September 1749, "the said George Cockburn sold to the said Earl All and Whole" the remaining portions of the barony, with the manor-place of Ormiston, for £10,200. George Cockburn, made a Comptroller of the Navy in 1750, was survived by two daughters, who both died childless. This document shows that, while John Cockburn was at the height of his improving zeal, the estate was carrying a debt of ten thousand pounds.

I am under deep obligation to Dr. Underhill, Coates Crescent, Edinburgh, for his courtesy in enabling me to read the letters of Cockburn to Alex. Wight, of whom Mrs. Underhill is a descendant. Though my work had been by this time virtually finished, they have been of very great service in confirming or modifying conjectures, and especially in establishing such essential points as Cockburn's birth, his visits to Scotland, when, by the way, he lived, not at the Hall, but in the village with Wight, and family differences, which bring out the fact that the 'Mrs. Cockburn' here was the wife of his brother Charles, and that both of them did much to thwart his schemes.

J. C.



LETTERS FROM MR. COKBURNE OF  
ORMISTOUN TO HIS GARDINER,  
CHARLES BELL

1727 to 1743



[NOTE.—The letters follow, as far as possible, the order of dating. As Old Style still prevailed, it was usual to double date an event falling within the first three months of the year, as 1733 $\frac{3}{4}$  for 1734. The manuscript has been scrupulously followed even to the extent of retaining a few repeats of single words. Notice has been taken in the footnotes of obvious slips or omissions, but these are singularly few. The letters have been numbered for reference.]

I

CHARLES,—It is some time since I heard from you. We 4 Dec. 1727. have had a very drie season. This last fortnight we have had it soft and foggy without ane air of wind or once seeing the sun, but since yesterday morning we have a great deal of rain from the N. East wch is the first rain they have had here since you went away, which went into the Ground 3 inches. I wrote to my Brör telling him that Will<sup>m</sup> the Gardener was gone from hence before I received your Letter desiring the Seeds he was to get from Mr. Colebrook's Gardener, and the best way I can think of for your getting of them was by writing to your Cousin John who is still in this neighbourhood, and you know he is acquainted with the people at Mr. Colebrooks. A Cook Maid who is going by Sea to my Brother goes from hence in some days, and I shall send by her a little of some seeds I have got since you went away. I believe you carried with you some of each kind I had before. As for a Carrot hough<sup>1</sup>—Sure you can direct the making of one, it being only a very small one the shape of a common paring hough with a handle in pro-

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<sup>1</sup> This archaic form of 'hoe' shows its connection with hack and Sc. howk, to dig.

portion. I hope the planting and the Tennents ditchen has gone well on in this open weather and that the Nurserys are put into some order. I found Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight and some others fond of a border w<sup>t</sup> a hedge in the middle and Willows of each side, such as he made before his House behind Will<sup>m</sup> Cokburne and the Colliers houses, but I fear they will find themselves deceiv'd if they expect to make a good fence of it against Cattle, it not having the advantage of a ditch, for cattle will go through any hedge that is not very old when it is upon a Levell with them, and they can lay their breasts to it. Tell them that this is my opinion. I know it is cheaper made, but the best hedge, even upon a height above cattle, has enough to doe and fear the willows will prove a small help to keeping of them in or out, till the hedge grows so strong as to resist them upon a flatt. I wish I may be in the wrong and not they. You know that I have advis'd the strengthening of our fences by the way I propos'd of covering the whole face of the Bank w<sup>t</sup> white and black thorn, even to make stronger fences than we made formerly, which is just contrary to this practice; and I believe in time they will wish they had follow'd the methode I desir'd you to show them, rather than this of theirs, tho' theirs costs much less trouble at first. Tom: fell from the Copper this day se'night when a brewing, and broke his Legg, but Mr. Evans<sup>1</sup> says he will doe well.

I have sent a good quantity of Melon Seeds which my Brother or you may make presents of or Exchange for other Seeds. All that are my own I can answer for being from good fruit, and I never sent any of them down to Scotland before.

They will be better some years hence. The other seeds I had directly from the places in ffrance I have nam'd upon y<sup>e</sup> papers.

My own Cabbage Seed of wch you know I had a great deal, was mostly let Shake as was all the Turnep Seed and most of the onion and Leeks. The Cabbage that was sav'd was all mix'd, but as it was from good Cabbage of all kinds, I have sent you some of it. I have put up also Savoys Seed, but I don't know wch is White and which is Green. I don't know if the Onion Seed is of the Strasburgh or Spanish or mix'd, for

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<sup>1</sup> Apparently a London surgeon. Home brewing was general then.



I found all neglected when I came home, few Seeds of any kind sav'd, and little left of the Seeds of the former year.

Toff,<sup>1</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Decr. 1727.

## II

CHARLES,—I wrote to you of 5th and also to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight 17 Jany. 1734. before I received yours. I have now yours of 7th. I can recollect little about planting which I did not mention to you in my last or in some letters I wrot to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight before I received any from you. I would have you prune up the hollys and Yews in the Haining as you doe other trees, to see how high we can carry them. I told you in my last my opinion about Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's Wood. There has been weather which allowed of little other work. I hope good use has been made of itt that way. A Wood to be cutt 3 or 4 years hence will be much the better for having the good for little trees cutt out now and the bodys of the trees which are to stand being all good a great way up. If this is done carefully now the bodies will grow a good deal in bigness in that time, and they will also putt out larger tops high up. They will cure of the Wounds and in 3 or 4 years be tall well body'd trees, so I am not for sparing in pruning up high espically what is not to be cutt till summer come 4 years. Don't all the trees in the little Wood by east the Town of Orm: want being prun'd up, to make them clean body'd and to encourage them in running high. Chizells with long handles must be us'd both in the old Wood and in that by east the Town. I don't know who are employ'd in the Woods or about the other plantations, neither doe I know what any of the people's business is who are my Serv<sup>ts</sup> there and my advices or directions have not been comply'd with being thought bad, so I won't order any thing. What I write is only my opinion to you, but doe you follow the orders you receive from my Brother, whether agreeable to what I write or not. I don't know at all upon what foot Ch: Cokburne is at the Town and how far he is or not my Serv<sup>t</sup>, and if he is my Serv<sup>t</sup> in what he has been employ'd for I have not heard of his having been Imploy'd about the

<sup>1</sup> 'Toff' here is a misreading for Tott., that is, Tottenham, where Cockburn lived before he removed to Hampstead.

planting. If he is my Serv<sup>t</sup> and working about the planting his business, I believe it will dispatch business best that you go with him, when any are to be planted by him that you go down and work with him and keep him to itt and see that he does right, and the like when he has such a piece of Work as the sneding<sup>1</sup> of the Wood by east the Town or such other things, and of the other hand when you have any thing to doe bring him up to assist you, for when he is alone I fear he will doe little and not well. I would also have you sometimes be w<sup>t</sup> Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokburne to assist him, espically when he has a Piece of Work which requires dispatch, and when you have some jobb in Garden, Nursery or otherwise, that you call him and his man to make up for the time you have help'd him. By this way more bussines will be done and you'l see to all being done right, for if things are not done right money and time is lost, and sometimes they had better be lett alone. Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: his man, Ch: Cokburne,<sup>2</sup> you and your man if you have one would quickly go through two years cutting of Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's Wood, and then you altogether would soon go through the Wood at the east end of the Town, and you would be sure all was well done. The like in sneding or supplying hedge row trees or pruning any of the other Woods, and so many of you would soon putt a piece of Nursery ground or Garden ground in order. Don't neglect what I wrote to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight of making Nursery ground good, as far as you can this year but for certain against next. Plant the tall Horse Chesnutts and Yews as you propose or in any other place you shall be order'd. You know the Horse Chesnutts must not be too much expos'd to winds. If you plant Walnutts the ground must be well wrought for a good depth and also a large hole for them. Their roots are tender and if they have not open earth for shooting their roots down in and also round, they will sitt. Ashes mix'd with the mould will help them much as it will keep it open. I expect to hear frequently from you and I desire you will lett me know every time who have been em-

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<sup>1</sup> Pruning. Cf. Ger. *schneiden*, to cut.

<sup>2</sup> John Cockburn's elder brother was Adam. He died in early youth. John's youngest brother Charles was an advocate (d. June 1742). The Cockburns here were not relatives, but tenant-servants.

ploy'd about planting in the Wood, Garden or Nursery from your Writing before. I design'd to have had 1000 or two of young Elms gather'd from Ditches and sent down, but this hard frost has not allow'd of itt, and there is now no Ship in the River for Leith in case the frost should brake. You can't plant the Walnuts too young, if they are well fenc'd from Cattle. They if young may be taken up w<sup>t</sup> the earth about them carefully and not a root . . . taking care to putt the spade deep down to take up the top root without cutting or braking of itt or any other. I desir'd you last year to speak to Mr. Mathie about firr seed, his father gott me some Norway and also some Swedish firr seed, and he will oblige me if he can gett me some of each. Lay flilberts and Cobb nuts for propagating.

17 Jany. 173 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

### III

CHARLES,—I had yours of 31<sup>st</sup> Jany. when I went on 12 Feby. 173 $\frac{3}{4}$ . Saturday to Hampstead. I had left a letter that morning to be putt into the post for Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight, a part of which I desir'd him to communicate to you. As I dont know the post Master of Haddington and how far he may take care of my letters, I have of late directed to be left at my father's house in Eden. Lett me know if they have come safe to hand or by what other direction you think he and you may have them left for the future. You should gett better Ink for the very direction of yours was so pale it could scarce be read.

I have sent down into Hertfordshire to see to get me 1500 or 2000 more Elms out of the hedges, in order to send them by Capt<sup>n</sup> Man, who assures me he will sail the 22<sup>d</sup> of this month. I wrote to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight to tell you about the getting ground ready, and also of my having sent a small vial w<sup>t</sup> some hundreds of Crab-Apple Seed.<sup>1</sup> Itt was so late before I knew of your coming to Orm : that I could get no more. I hope you sent some of your Asparagus to my ffather.<sup>2</sup>

There are some particulars in yours you have not been full

<sup>1</sup> It is still used as stock on which to put grafts for fruit trees.

<sup>2</sup> This was the usual capital *f*. Cf. ffance. His father died in Edinburgh in the following year. See Introduction, p. xxvii.



enough about to make me understand the full state of the things you write about ; and I believe you have not fully understood some things I mentioned to you. You have not told me where it is propos'd to begin first to cutt the Wood. You seem to say all up to the Bark Barn is to be put to Sale next moneth. I thought some under that (if run in a line to Pencaitland Wood) was cutt much later than some above it. You tell me that my Brother was to look upon it when he returns from Eden : in order to putt it in order for being advertis'd. To be sure there may be some decay'd Branches or a few decay'd trees to be taken away now, if it is to bee expos'd to sale, but the putting it in order for Sale I meant, was giving a through weeding and sneding up to a Wood, three years before it came to be expos'd to Sale, that it might have three years growth after this last great sneding, which I believ'd would doe it a great deal of real service before it came to sale, and after this through sneding it was to want no more but being clear'd of dead wood the Spring before putting of it to Sale. If it has not had this through snedding some years ago, which I call the preparing of it for Sale, the doeing of it now or one year before Sale, hurts itt and disfigures itt. I compare what ought to be done to a Wood the Spring or Winter before putting of it to Sale to a jockey's combing and brushing his horse and putting a white clean bridle upon his head the morning before carrying him to Markett. Whereas the preparing of him to look really well has or should have begun three months before, and if the jokky has omitted the putting him into good order in the proper time, the white Bridle won't be enough tho' it may sett of<sup>1</sup> a little—and he must content himself with a price less than what he might have had, by three times the value of what the trouble of putting of him in Order in time would have cost. So it will be by<sup>2</sup> the Wood ; what can be done to what is to be sold now, should only be taking away what is dead and would look ugly to the Eye ; but if it has not had the through sneding some years ago, there is no help for it now, and the wood will be really the worse for that omission, more

<sup>1</sup> *Of* and *off* were not then regularly distinguished in spelling. The distinction in dialect is *o'* and *aff*. There are many examples in the Letters of this word in the sense of 'on,' *e.g.* 'of the other hand.' Cf. Ger. *auf*.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of.

than the trouble was worth by three times. The endeavouring to retrieve this now by sneding what is to be cutt this or next year, is doing more hurt, as the wounds won't be cur'd before it is expos'd to sale. I think a through sneding of a Wood which is to have three years growth after that before it is to be expos'd to Sale, will doe it a great deal of real good, but I am entirely against any sneding after that, further than to take off dead wood or to clear up any twigs which may come out in the body of the trees, and therefore I wishd Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: you or any other who had been appointed for that business, had upon receipt of my letter, begun to give this through sneding to the wood which is reckon'd to be cutt in Summer 1737, for any thing of a through sneding to any wood to be cutt before that, will doe it no good but will disfigure it, as the Wounds won't have time to cure neither will the trees have time to take on the growth which they will after such a sneding. Wherefore I am only for putting the White Bridle upon the wood which is to go to Markett and be cutt between this and the Summer 1737, for I think you will doe hurt in doing more to itt, and what is then to be putt to Sale for cutting that year, I should advise to be throughly sned up now, and when the Bark will rise upon the Oaks. I am convinc'd that this management will make a very great Improvement to a Hag of Wood<sup>1</sup> by that time and even beyond what any will Imagine who sees it now, and is not acquainted with the growth of a tree unloaded of a great weight of branches and from a root unloaded of too many trees coming from it, and is made thin enough to lett in air and yett not too thin to lett in cold enough to stunt it in growth. This leads me to think that it will be very bad management to sell too much wood at a time. I mean, to Sell this spring Wood to be cutt three or 4 Years hence, for whoever buys itt now will not make allowance enough for so many years growth. A Wood lately thin'd and Sned up as I recommended in one of my former, and as I now have endeavour'd to explain, will appear thin, poor and small. Whereas three years hence by the growth of the trees in that

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<sup>1</sup> A clump of trees enclosed for the timber by a hedge (Anglo-Saxon *haga*, 'a hedge').



time, it will appear thick, in good order and the trees well body'd both in hight and bignes of body. Was my advice to be taken I would not sell above two years cutting att a time and I dare say £300 pounds worth will yield £350 if not sold att above one or two years cutting at a time. If two years cutting is now to be sold I would thin a little now what is to be putt up in Spring 1736, but not thin it or make so great wounds in it as you may venture to doe now in what is to be cutt in 1737. If all is now to be sold that is below the Bark Barn, you'l sett it ill off by thinning or Sneding it much now, for as that will require many years cutting the advantage of the growth of so many years, will be lost and not valued by the buyer near to what in all probability it will really deserve. In short it is my opinion that not above what can be cutt this next Summer, or at most this Summer 1734 and Summer 1735, should be now putt up to Sale and that what will come for being cutt in Summer 1736 shall be presently drest by thinning and sneding up, but not so thoroughly sned up as what will fall to be cutt in Summer 1737. I hope I have explain'd my way of thinking as to the management of the Wood next to be sold. But I am not obstinate and if I am in the wrong and it is thought that . . . years cutting will sell for more money if sold . . . than if parcel'd out and not sold till it has gott all it's growth I give up my opinion I have us'd a great many words to explain what I mean, I wish you may doe it better than I fancy you did before. Itt would have been a much properer season for executing of this when I wrot first than it will be when this getts to your hands, but delays are the delight of people in Scotland when no delay is necessary and att other times they are in a hurry to have things done when by allowing of time they wood succeed better. You tell me 800 Trees have been planted in the Hedge rows at the Town. I wish you had been more particular as to their size, kinds and where planted and if all taken out of the Wood there or from whence gott. You say D. Wight has gott 200 and Alex<sup>r</sup> for the Mains the like number. I shall be glad to know their size kinds and from whence gott. Has Rob<sup>t</sup> Wight and James Ranoldson gott non. Have they given over planting. You sent me a List of Trees in Nursery and the Sizes. I wish you had told me how

long they had stood since transplanted, that I might have gues'd the better what we have for planting out in the Wood or other places next winter, for what have been transplanted this winter won't be for planting out next, and I fear we shall be very bare of nurserys for planting out for thickening the Wood or other uses.

I think Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's wood is only to be hain'd 15 years from cutting, so it must be all planted well up the first year, and we must take care in right planting of itt and that the trees be thriving and good, that in 15 years they may be out of danger from Cattle, Since I can't keep them longer out of itt. Such things must be thought of in time. I believe it is now about 15 years since the Swineward was cutt<sup>1</sup>—pray let me know how the planted trees in it are and if they are out of danger from being spoilt by Cattle. Not that I think of turning Cattle into itt, but to guess from it how it may be where the time is settled by Alex<sup>r's</sup> Lease. I wish Capt<sup>n</sup> Mathie's Ship may gett<sup>2</sup> in time for getting Norraway or Swedish fir Seed. Itt is odd that in ane article in the news papers dated Leith 23 Jany. it is said that the Glasgow Packett was arriv'd. This is the name of the Ship my Seeds and first trees were in, and yett neither Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight nor you seam to know.

If you have as drie weather as we, it will require . . . well soak'd with watter at first planting . . . and also wattering well sometimes afterwards in fresh weather if drie. I told you how I would have the young Elms planted in furrows for receiving and throwing the watter into their roots. Look over the Nurserys again and send me acc<sup>t</sup> what trees you think you'l have of 2 feet and above for planting out in the Wood or otherways, next Winter, for a year (particularly in the wood) must not be lost for the reason I gave you, and in so far as our own Nurserys fall short, we must in time look out for good thriving trees of from 2 to three f<sup>t</sup> for the Wood. Oaks and Ashes of that size and firs of a proper size to keep out of

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<sup>1</sup> Hence in 1719 there was grown timber here. Other cases of early planting are: Tynningham, 1705; Penicuik, 1710; Monymusk, 1716; Arniston, 1726; Prestonfield, 1727.

<sup>2</sup> Arrive. Father and son are referred to on p. 5.

the way of being smother'd with Grass will be wanted. Trees that have been transplanted this year won't doe for planting out next tho' of size, as they'l be too weak for putting into the Wood where cattle must gett in 15 years after cutting, for the trees transplanted for two years together won't gett strength in two years, at least, after being sett out, to make any Shoots, so as the time is short we must have healthful trees to plant in the Wood, and that in Autome, that they may take hold of the ground in the Winter and be the safer from a drie Spring the year after.

If it is the lower end of the Wood that is to be begun with to be cutt this year, Allers<sup>1</sup> will be wanted as I believe some of it is wett. Have you of them. How many trees of each kind are commonly planted in a years cutting of the Wood. Such things must be consider'd and known in order to judge what we can doe and what will be wanted. So look out narrowly, compute and lett me know what you have, what you'l want next year for the Wood to be cut and what for hedge rowes. If the Acorns gett safe to you and each of the Tennents have dibbled into their banks of them as I wrott to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight when I sent them, they'l be pretty well as to the Oaks for the ditches they have now, and if they will next Winter dibble in Ashen Kyes<sup>2</sup> as I also wrot to Alex<sup>r</sup> at the same time, they'l doe pretty well also for their present ditches of that kind, and where for the future any come to want being supply'd I hope we shall have English Elms from Nursery for them, but for two years to come we shall fall short for the Wood, as also for any new Inclosures or divisions which the Tennents shall make and for ffrirs for the Wood till what you sow this spring shall come to a proper hight. This as appears to me is the best tho' a very poor situation of our Nurserys. I wish you could fall upon a good seed bed of 2 or 3000 ffrirs and plant them out just now in Nursery, possibly if putt in good nursery ground some of them in two years may run high enough to be ventured in the Wood. If you can gett such a thing for love

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<sup>1</sup> Alders, among the oldest of our native trees. It enjoys a moist situation. A.-S. *alr* shows that *al* is intrusive in 'alder.' This tree plays a great part in folk-lore. Cf. Goethe's Erl-könig, the elf-king. The sap shows a bright red.

<sup>2</sup> Keys or seeds of the ash.



or money gett itt and soon. I have your two Letters one for your Brother and the other for Mr. Gregory. But I dont well understand your directions about receiving the £10. Last year there was a Bill and when that became due I received it and order'd my Bro<sup>r</sup> to pay £10 to your ffather. Has your Bro<sup>r</sup> sent me other £10 this year, or what order has Mr. Gregory from your Brother for paying of £10 now. However I shall send your Letter to Mr. Gregory and if he pays £10 to me I shall desire my Bro<sup>r</sup> to pay £10 to you. I shall keep the Letter for your Brother till Mr. Gregory pays me the £10 and if he does not pay it I shall return that letter to you.

London, 12 feby. 173 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

I find now that this paper is not of the same size w<sup>t</sup> the first sheet of my letter.

## IV

CHARLES,—I received yours of 7<sup>th</sup> and wrot some days ago <sup>21 Feby. 173 $\frac{3}{4}$ .</sup> to Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight, but as I was just going out of Town I could only desire him to tell you some things which occur'd. We have had very stormy weather so I fear to hear from Herfordshire<sup>1</sup> that they have gott me few Elms, but I expect every moment to hear and to gett the Bills of Loading for what are brought to Town. If you have had the rains we have had they would come seasonably for your new planted trees and the Seeds, if all were putt into the ground. Did you meet with any number of English Elms in the Haining?<sup>2</sup> Were there not some putt into the Swine Ward or into the first planted Haggs in the Wood or by the Well under Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokburne's? Are there no ever Green Oaks under Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokburne's and how doe the other trees thrive there? I wish you could gett some seed of Silver ffirr, I think

<sup>1</sup> Herts. See p. 5, No. III.

<sup>2</sup> Frequently referred to. In the days when the fields were all open a spot near the homestead—in this case, the mains or home farm—enclosed or not, was kept in grass mixed with furze and brushwood, so as to help the cows to tide over the winter and spring. This was the haining, from the root of hedge and hag above. To hain (p. 9) is to spare. Hence the proverb, 'A penny haind's a penny gained.'



I remember old Trees at Nithry.<sup>1</sup> The sooner you gett the seed of the common ffrirs out of the Apples the better, try some few before a ffire not too near, to gett a bed early sow'd, to try if they won't advance further than what came out with the Sun some time hence. I hope the Tennents dibbled in the Acorns in their dykes before the rains came. Don't plant out the ffilberts this year, it is now late so keep them till Oct<sup>r</sup>, but you may lay a few of both White and Red and also of the Cobb Nutts, and as it is late even for that, twist the small branch a little where you cover itt with the ground, which I believe may make them take root sooner. You may try some this way and some not twisted, to see which does best. I have thought of a place for planting of them against Oct<sup>r</sup>. Doe non offer to bear which were planted in the hedge of Swine Ward or other places. Your new planted Nurserys<sup>2</sup> will require wattering this Spring and Summer. A cart for Water will be wanted, and the Watter will be much the better it stands in the cask 24 hours and in the Sun before being us'd. Don't trust to little Spring or Summer Showers which don't reach the roots. If once the roots drie and shrink, wattering won't recover them, for they'l dye or Stunt. Little more can be done to Nurserys this Season but to keep them clean and such as are transplanted this Spring, well watter'd. I fear the winds will loosen all the new planted trees. Squeezing the earth fast to their roots will be of great service. I wrote to you last year about the Walnutt wch were planted of North and South sides of pann Meadow. Lett me know if any of them look thriving, how tall they are, how many are gone or seam not to be worth keeping in the ground. If any have been supply'd since you went down or if they have been dug round as I wrot to you before you went away. If not I wish you will make a trench two f<sup>t</sup> broad and near the like depth round each thriving tree, throw the turf into the bottome and good light mold to fill it up to the top, that they may spread their roots, for the Walnutt roots are tender and if the earth is not open they can't force roots through itt, and if they shoot ane

<sup>1</sup> Niddrie, the ancient seat of the Wauchopes, near Musselburgh. By 1740 he had secured silver firs. See p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Here not a place, as now, but nurslings.

inch or two one year all or part of it will dye before next, which you'l observe the case with Walnuts frequently when they dont like the soil, and when they doe so, you may take them up for they are not worth keeping, and a nutt putt in next year will be a tree before one wch has stood 4 or 5 years without thriving, so pull all up that don't thrive. I mean that the new trench shall be round without<sup>1</sup> the one was made at first planting, to give more room for their roots, and by the time they have gott roots deep and broad round them, they'l gett strength to force roots through unopen'd ground. Walnuts require open good ground or that the ground bewell open'd and made good both deep down and a good way round. I am afraid at first planting this was neither done deep enough or for a sufficient distance round, and it should be help'd now to such as seam to thrive, taking care not to cutt any roots which may have got further than the hole made at first planting. You may gett some hundreds of Chesnutts and putt into Nursery tho' late, Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight knows where to gett good and cheap. How doe the Chesnuts doe in the Haining and Woods. Lett me also know of the Beeches in the several places where planted. I think a good many were planted towards east side of Swineward. In one of yours you mentioned the having gott some Acorns. Whence had you them, were they as good as what I sent, what did they cost, and when did you putt them into the Ground? Have you any rawen tree<sup>2</sup> Berrys laid in earth? What Effect doe you observe the grafting of filberts has had? If good remember to doe more.

I am just now inform'd the Elms are come to Town and will be putt on board of Capt<sup>n</sup> Man's Ship to-morrow morning and he proposes to fall down the River about noon, so have the ground ready for them, and pray lett directions be given for knowing when the Ship getts to Leith, and lett them be brought home as soon as she does. I have desir'd H. Mills to get me a Receipt or Bill of Loading to be sent down next post and if I gett itt I will send itt you directed<sup>3</sup> to Hadington. So let whoever goes to that markt on friday call at the post

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<sup>1</sup> Outside.

<sup>2</sup> Rowans and hazels are good stocks on which to put grafts.

<sup>3</sup> Directed to you to, etc.

house there. I believe there are about 2000 of them. We have had more rain w<sup>t</sup>in this week than all this Winter before.

21 ffeby. 173 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

## V

21 Decr. 1734.

CHARLES,—I have your's just now of 13<sup>th</sup> Inclosing the Acc<sup>t</sup> of trees planted in the Wood and to be planted in the Spring, which I wrote for in the form you now send itt. Your Ink and my Eyes are both so bad that I can scarce read your letters, and this last so bad upon the direction that I am surpris'd how they found out at the post house for whom it was. I am keeping the post man, so I must make this as short as I can. I understand that notwithstanding all I have repeated again and again to Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: he is sneding up trifling Birches and Quack Esps which ought to be quite cutt down. Sure, Sure he is most obstinate. How many trees did I stand by and make him cutt after he had been puzzling and losing time in sneding of them and the tree if lett grow could never have signify'd but have disfigur'd the Wood. Upon Receipt of this go to him and tell him if after all I have said he neither can use common sense, nor will he follow repeated and positive orders, tho I have been at so much pains to explain my orders, that I will putt ane end to his working in the Wood at all, for I won't have my woods manag'd as they have been, neither can I be eternally plagued w<sup>t</sup> repeating orders. My patience will have ane end, and I will not have my Woods gone through as if Dres'd, and trees left to disfigure the whole, even at last dressing, as he knows this is to the Easter Wood. I have order'd you to go sometimes and see how he goes on, so if you don't see to his observing my orders, you must take the Blame. In short make him go over it again, and cutt down his Bables of Birches and Quack Esps,<sup>1</sup> which never can come to any thing, being so much smaller than the rest will disfigure itt and sink the price of the rest but never can add to the value. He must give up his passionate love for such good for nothings, or my Service. That is in Short, for I will be serv'd in my own

<sup>1</sup> Used in contempt from the fool's bauble or mace, a regular property on the Elizabethan stage. These birches would be self-sown and lanky. 'Quack Esps' are quaking (trembling) aspens.



way. I thought I saw a good many fine Beeches for our purpose, between <sup>1</sup> the Entrie and the old path and thereabouts. But if you find trees for our purpose which can well be spar'd from the Wood by east the Town, Espically where hurting Oaks, be sure to pick them out. Observe to match the Beeches as near a hight and the best plants of the size you can have. Have not I wrott again and again about planting, trenching, etc., in the Addition to the Nursery. Can you believe I would order the like but upon supposition that it was thoroughly fenc'd. I certainly order'd Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: and his man keeping close to dressing the Easter and then the Wester Wood, but I added except necessary business required his leaving of the Wood and doing what prest. Could any thing press more than making the rice dike, if the Nursery is not safe without it. If Ch: Cokburne's assistance is necessary for forwarding this, sett him to itt and delay sending of him to the Wood by the Town till that and the fencing of the Beeches is in a forwardnes, tho' it shall keep him a week after receipt of this, before he goes to the Wood by the Town. You may remember I desir'd the mixing some Orientall plains with the platinus's like a Rowe below Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb:'s. I am surpris'd to hear of a Border to plant a hedge upon and fancy that can make a fence against Cattle. You know very well the folly the two Alex<sup>r</sup> Wights committed that way 7 years ago.<sup>2</sup> Such a hedge won't make a fence these 20 years and for that time must have a fence of each side of itt if ever cattle are to gett near itt for a horse or a Cow being above it will sett their breast to it and force through with their weight, till it getts great strength. Itt is not like a hedge that has the advantage of a ditch and bank and so is above the Breast of horse or ox. Besides this

<sup>1</sup> In the Glen in front of the house. The 'Entrie' is the avenue.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the first letter. A hedge is explained here as planted on the top of a bank or ditch, sometimes called a dyke. When Cockburn means a trench, he says 'ditches or drains.' From the English ditches, or hedged dykes, he got his elm saplings. It was an improved turf wall, known as the Ayrshire dyke, and still seen all over County Down. The dry stone wall was a Galloway dyke. Atop of these earthen dykes Cockburn planted a double hedge, and hard wood trees at intervals. Professor Walker, writing late in the century, says that three-quarters of British timber was then grown in hedgerows. 'Rice dike' above is a wattled fence. See p. 94, 'I design the tops for dry fences.'



never will doe without being clip'd and made very thick and strong like a Garden hedge, and if it chances to grow very well and equal, is well clip'd and well fenc'd from cattle, about 20 years hence our Border hedge may be trusted alone with cattle. You can't believe that in the Wood, air enough can touch it so low upon the ground to make it thrive well, so being in the Wood requir'd the more it to be rais'd for the sake of air. Add to all this, If you have obey'd my orders in picking out the best of the poor, starv'd quick Setts you had in Nursery for the ditch at bottome of the Wood cutt this year and for the addition to the Nursery, I am sure what remain are fitt for planting out no where; So I am surpris'd how you came to tell my Bro<sup>r</sup> you had thorns for it. Doing things by halfs is the foolishhest way of throwing away money. Had you made a Common ditch and planted a thin rowe of these poor thorns a top of the bank they when taken root in some years might have run up a little, and if you had run the Bank full of Black thorn and Bramble as I order'd at the foot of the Wood, by the time cattle came to be lett into it, there might have been a fence by help of the ditch and bank cover'd w<sup>t</sup> the Black thorn and Bramble, but for your Border it never will make a fence and never will signify a farthen towards inclosing any thing, but upon the terms I mention'd above. If this has the fate my advice to the Wights had when they were at their Borders 7 years ago it will just turn out as their's has done, and seven years hence it will be found that I was in the right. I think you in the wrong in planting young Nursery among the Oaks, I rather crop the ground as I wrott before and then all that ground will be clear at once this time next year and such crops as I mention'd will doe the present trees service and the ground also. You can't be straittened for Nursery ground just now w<sup>t</sup> the help of the addition. I wish to know how many of these Oaks remain.

21 Dec<sup>r</sup>. 1734.

You know it was fear of taking too much business upon hand this year when we had so much to overtake, made me lay aside thoughts of making real Inclosures and devisions which would have been fencible in the Wood. Let Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: his man and Ch: Cokb: go directly to fencing of the

Nursery, and your men to trenching, etc. When forwarded, lett Ch: go as I ordered in my last, after planting the Beeches, Chesnutts and Walnutts. I hope you've gott men who wont refuse working in Woods or Nurserys as there shall be occasion, as your two fine Gentlemen did. Had I known of this Border before undertaken, I would have advis'd the adding some trouble and expence which would have made it really answer.

## VI

CHARLES,—In case you are doeing any thing for yourself at <sup>27 Decr. 1734.</sup> the Town I have putt into the inclos'd ane article which may be for your service and prevent your being found fault with in case you want now and then to see and forward your own affairs or want any thing from the Garden at the house. If you are doeing nothing you are certainly neglecting what may turn out to your advantage. Your father told me himself that he could sell much more than his Garden produces. The people told me they would buy six times as much as he ever had to sell if he had it and would sell at a lower price. Itt is commonly our Scots way to do little busines but squeeze up high prices. Whereas it would be much more real advantage to enlarge the business, have the profitth tho small upon it yet great from enlarging of itt, not great upon a little, but from many smalls to make a Great. Itt is true this way of thinking and acting is not like the common way with us and brakes in upon our Lasie, Indolent disposition and requires thought, Industry and activity in contriving and executing with life. I hope you don't think to lett that Garden and ground continue to be manag'd in the stupid way your father is going on in. He has choak'd what he has in Garden so as he can have little undercrop in it, and for his land his Husbandry goes no further than to gett bad Grain one year and worse the next. If you lett it go on so what I designed as a favour to you will turn to your loss. As you have seen so much it will be most unaccountable in you if you fall into the stupid, Indolent inactive way of doeing so comon in our Country. I think I should rather call it not doeing, for if a man with us can squeeze out of a little work as much as can keep his Skin and

bones together, he'l never think or act till some such opportunity offers again when he can take ane advantage and gett double price for something, and this we prefer to a large way of thinking and acting, by which we may enlarge our busines, gett constant and good busines. Some again with us are misers and from thence can't enlarge their business or find in their heart to part with any thing at a small profit. This again hinders some from selling a third of what they might. If you are wise you'l avoid such narrow ways, encourage customers by serving of them well and cheap, by which you'l have ten for one your father has, and you'l draw the country in to rise ten times the Garden stuff they doe. Contrive how to have crop under crop and something to bring you money every day of the year and lett your Gain be from disposing of quantities. I hope the Town is upon Improving, and in a little may make a pretty demand itself, Espically if they can gett things readily and cheap. One great reason for our people's living as they doe and not as they doe in Engld. is the difficulty there is in getting things at all, and if to be gott they pay so dear for them, all sellers w<sup>t</sup> us thinking of nothing but sharpening a high price and sometimes for what is bad and being Idle again till ane opportunity happens for their doing so again. This is wrong judging whether it proceeds from Sloathfull Indolence or miserable covetousness. Could the Lasie man bring himself to more activity or the Covetous man to a larger way of thinking, they would both gett more busines and more money from having more customers. If once by the above method you introduc'd the use of Garden stuff, it would encrease fast and take more and more in the Country, and I make not the least doubt of your finding encouragement and profit from adding every year considerably, to your Kitchen Garden Ground. Among other things which may add to your demand a good publick House may and if George proceeds I believe he will endeavour to have better things than our Co<sup>m</sup>on dirty Hog stays where nothing is to be gott but nasty Barm which we call Tuppeny<sup>1</sup> and by accident ane Oat or pease Cake. The wise use your father will make of such a

<sup>1</sup> The favourite drink of the time, and occupying the place of the modern tea, sold at twopence the pint, equal to two English quarts. 'Barm' is yeast. Oats and pease were the staple cereals. George Ramsay is 'mine host' here.



new demand will be for him to raise his price in place of raising more Garden Stuff and encouraging people to call for more from him. The consequence of which will be, no more being cal'd for and he'll lose the business he might encrease to a great business. This never fails to prove the case with narrow souls who are the destroyers of all attempts for Improving our Country and keeps themselves poor Grovellers in a low way all their lives in place of creating business to themselves and their getting not only to make them live well but money before hand. I am convinc'd for one thing George if he thrives and can gett them, will take more raspberry from you than you can raise, for Brandy every year. The north side of the hedge of your father's Garden where now inclos'd w<sup>t</sup> a Barberry hedge, is well shaded and would be very proper for a large plantation of them. The very Apothecaries in Edinburgh would take quantities every year. Besides if Gentlemen liked them in punch at George's they would come there to drink it and probably buy the fruit to use it at home. Both ways will encrease the demand upon you if once the use of them is introduced. You know it is a fruit few have in quantities, so you if such a thing takes, will have the market. I mention such things to make you turn your thoughts to the like. You know I used a great many in my family and still do and all who taste it like it and many in Scotld: have told me they would make,<sup>1</sup> upon having tasted it with me, but they could not gett any quantity of fruit. George if he succeeds, may also take Gooseberries Green for Baking or Sauces if Gentlemen come to his house, and also Cherries, Gooseberries and other fruits ripe, for Gentlemen may like a dish of fruit, or such things Baked may go off, if to be had. Other markets will also take such things. You can't doubt of Archichokes, pease, Beans, parsnips, Carrots and the like going off if you have them at proper seasons. I don't mean that all are to be ready of one day, but crops under other and in winter what is proper then as in Summer or when every body has not an over Stock of the same things. I must add to my paper having said more than I designed when I began, as frequently happens when I begin to advise any of you.

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<sup>1</sup> Read, 'take it.'



I know your father will say his dung must go to his corn. Should not dung be turned to the use it will yield the best return from, and there can be no dispute but if you will turn head and hands to it, you may have a better return from Kitchen Garden than from Corn. Besides if he will use better Husbandry to his Land, it will yield him more than it has ever done in his way, with all his dung. I told you that I would help you a little to plants or seeds from hence, if you told me of your wants. I advise you to do even what you can do this season, plant small and large fruits and Crop what you can of your ground for Kitchen Garden and don't fall into the stupid sleepy way so common in Scotld. Get the best plants and Seeds you now can in your neighbourhood, and if we live till next year let me know what you want from hence. But don't neglect making a good beginning even this season. As you'll have occasion to be frequently at the Wood by the Town you'll have an opportunity of seeing how your own work goes on, and overseeing my ditching and planting at the Town next year, will also be a conveniency for you. So set about it with spirit and a view of enlarging of it. I think few if any have suffered by the advices I have given and I hope if you follow my advices and do your part in contriving and executing you wont be the first that will suffer, nay I am fully convinced that in a little you may bring your ground to give you full business and with good profit, tho' you had it only to depend upon. I need not tell you this letter is to yourself and the other to be communicated to my Brothers as usual. Tell Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight his Pease and Beans went last week for which he was to have a Bill of Loading last post, as Lauder told George. You and he are best judges if they come too late or not. If you think they do, had he not best sow his own pease in the meantime. You may show Alex<sup>r</sup> this letter. I dare say he'll give you the best advice he can, and two head laid together and talking sedately upon a subject generally bring out something solid and lay down a scheme proper to be followed and from whence good may arise. So think and contrive what may answer and execute with life and activity.

27<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1734.

I think you should contrive a pond for keeping Water in Summer for watering. You may enlarge it afterwards by degrees. If you let the Water from your Well into it, you'll have a constant supply and a little fresh running into it will keep it full and sweet in the dryest Seasons.

## VII

CHARLES,—Inclos'd I send you some Memd<sup>ms</sup> I had taken 15 Feby. 1734<sup>1</sup> before I received yours of 7<sup>th</sup>. I have only to add that from what firrs you gett from Biel<sup>1</sup> and Pencaitland,<sup>2</sup> supply and fill up all shall be wanted in Wester Wood and Nursery the rest, in case more dye of what have been planted or of what are to be planted. I think you have thin'd the Seed beds of Oaks too much, if you have only left 1000 in them all. When all planting is over lett me have ane exact List of Nurseries with the time of their being transplanted and their height. Continue to write to me, for my Brother, Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight and John Christie<sup>3</sup> have given it over. Write fully of every thing of your own business and also what you hear or observe, for I expect to hear no more from any about what passes at Orm: The reason I don't know. You may go on upon my last letter and this, without taking notice or showing this or the Memd<sup>ms</sup> Inclos'd to any, or Showing of them or this, so lett my last letter be shown as I desir'd in it, but don't show this or any I shall write unless I order it.

Hampstead, 15<sup>th</sup> ffeby. 1734<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A mansion famous for its woods and terraced garden, overhanging Biel Water, a stream which gives its name to Belhaven Bay, near Dunbar. In the rich flat beside the stream, and in front of the house, is a cedar of Lebanon with a history, for tradition says it was planted (1707) by the Earl of Belhaven who opposed the Union, and gained for himself the reputation of being the only great orator the old Scottish Parliament ever produced. This tree is reputed the finest of its kind in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> Pencaitland adjoins Ormistoun parish on the east.

<sup>3</sup> John Christie, on the list of club members (not original) as linen-draper in Ormistoun. Coming (1730) from the north of Ireland, on the motion of Wight, he introduced the linen industry in the village. The tradition is that the potato came to Ormistoun from Ireland, also through Christie; but Wight was growing in 1726. See Introduction.

I believe Gregory does not design to pay the £10 for I have sent ten times and they alwise say he is abroad and has left no word.

## VIII

3 June 1735.

CHARLES,—I have had none from you since my last. We have this day a great deal of soft rain, which if with you will do great service to forward both Grass and Corn and may secure many of the weak rooted trees planted last Winter and also make your lay'd trees strike root if well earthed.

This I design chiefly for some thoughts about Improving of your father's Garden and land of which if you do right you'll turn a good deal off into Kitchen and Orchard Garden. In doing of which I still think you might have made more progress last Winter and by so doing you might have made a beginning in drawing in the people to a better taste towards Garden stuff, which tho' you had made no other profit directly, yet that if you had saved yourself only, as to the expence, would have been getting,<sup>1</sup> as it would have encreased the demand next year. I can't think the finding of the ground was a full excuse, for tho' the cleaning of much at once might have been expensive, yet I can't think but the cleaning and putting some in order had it only been to introduce what I am sure by good management, you'll find advantage in afterwards, would have been for your service.<sup>2</sup> Indeed if you propose to follow your father's narrow, vastly mistaken notion of raiseing ten Cabbages and not disposing of them tho' in danger of rotting, unless he gets the price of 30 for them, you'll be in the right, provided nobody will raise cabbages but yourself, but this wont hold long, for the dearer you keep up your price the more others will be encouraged to take up the business, which is the constant consequence of those foolish, narrow, low notions.<sup>3</sup> A man in a fortnight or three weeks would have trenched as much as would have made a beginning and would

<sup>1</sup> Profit.

<sup>2</sup> Read transposed thus:—'would have been for your service, you'll find advantage in afterwards.'

<sup>3</sup> Low in sense of commonplace, lowly. Cf. Latin *humilis*. Note the sound business principles here.



have paid for the trouble and have encreased the demand next year, Besides the advancing a year of such small or large fruits as you had planted. Your father's Garden is well sheltered by the houses and rising Ground from the one hand and by the high hedge of the other, and he has water at hand. So he may raise any thing in it the climate will allow of. He has crowded it with fruit trees, too thick even for them to bear as they would, espically when a little older, as in that warm place they advance very fast. By this he loses the undergrowth also by which he might make double what he makes by the fruit from the trees, espically they being of the most common fruit which would answer as well in the most exposed part of his field. So warm a lying spot should either have been employed entirely in double crops for a Kitchen or if for fruit it should have been in kinds every spot wont produce, and for that reason yielded more. I incline to think mulberys would have done of either side the walk at the lower end, as being warm and covered from all severe weather. If so, one tree of them would have yielded as much money as half a dozen of the common apples now in it and would have taken no more room than one of the present. I am convinced that if Mulberys will do any where in Scotld: they will there, it being entirely covered from Weather and yet open to the Sun, except in so far as shaded by apple trees. The most of the trees now there may be kept if you incline to it till other more valuable fruits are brought up to bearing. I am also convinced Quinces will do very well of either side that hedge at bottom of your father's Garden, as it is moist tho' not wett. Of north side they must be at such a distance as not to be shaded from the South Sun by the hedge. I would gladly know if you had 4 good bearing Mulberys of south side the lower walk in the Garden, if you don't think they would yield more than all the fruit trees now in that Garden. If so you would have all the rest of it to the good, and what it can be made yield more than it does now, would be so much got. I don't mention this as recommending the presently rooting out all the fruit trees and planting Mulberys or Quinces, but I think you may thin them by taking out some of the worst kinds or worst Bearing, and put in upon the south side of the lower



walk 4 Mulberys and as many Quinces. If you find the Mulberys do, then as they grow up take out even the Quinces and put them somewhere else. If the mulberys don't doe take them out and leave the Quinces. You'll get at the certainty before the trees become too thick and by taking one of the two out you'll prevent the whole of the ground being over-shaded as now. The trees you take out may be planted in places more exposed and that warm piece of ground kept for nicer kinds and thinner of trees that you may have the advantage also of nicer and more undergrowth. So I think the half of the trees or possibly the third of them may yield more money than at present, from the quality of the fruit, and you may keep some of the present till the young come to bear and what you moue now to make room for the young may be planted further into the field where I dare say all the common kinds will do as well as in most Gardens in the Country, and you can't miss having in that warm spot all sorts of Winter and early Salading, fine Collyflowers or such things, when you get the ground put in order and it not so overshadowed as it is now. May not even better kinds of Pears and Apples yield more than the common kinds—for example a good Nonpareil and a St German yield more than two common apple trees and two Summer Pears. If so you have more ground free as two trees may bring as much money as four of the common kinds. What I aim at is to turn your ground to the best and most proper uses, the warmest and best to what requires it, and the common coarse fruits or herbs to places where they will do and the nicer wont. I am also for doing this by degrees and not for you taking all away at once, and so being without bearing trees at all till your young or what you transplant in order to thin the Garden come to bear. I foresee objections. That Mulberys won't do. That Apples and Pears are sold by the measure and the best and worst kinds give the same price. An apple is only an Apple, and people don't distinguish, and some more difficulties of this kind. As to the first I am not sure that Mulberries won't do. If in any place in our climate I believe it will be at bottom of your father's Garden. It is no great matter to try, and if they dont it is only taking them out and leaving



the other trees. Whereas if they ripen you'l take out the Quinces and leave them. As to people not distinguishing one apple or pear from another, I hope all by North Tweed don't deserve this unsensible character. But there are a world of things not used in Scotld: because not to be had, and if you introduce good kinds such as Nonpariels Russedines and the like and put them into the hands of a few at Eden: who know the difference, you'l soon find a demand for all you can have, and by having such you will even get Customers for other things. Depend upon it there are people in Eden: who have taste and if you can once get into the custom of some who have it, will put others upon enquiring where they had good things, and this will hold in your herbs etc. as well as in your fruit. Do you think it possible that there are not Families and Taverns in Eden: that would give reasonably for young pease and Beans in July and Aug<sup>t</sup> if they could get them. Suppose now you sent a dish of young pease or Beans to any of your Customers when only old are to be had, and desire them to let their acquaintances know you can furnish the like, don't you think they would go off, or if you got into the custom of such as M<sup>rs</sup> Thom who keeps a Tavern, do you believe she would not find people who would be glad of them, and so would take from you. Possibly they may not give such a price as just when first coming coming in, but if you get a price you can afford them at, it does your business. Don't you even think that the people who sell Garden stuff and fruit at Eden: Such as the man<sup>1</sup> who has built a House at Inveresk whose name I have forgot, would deal with you if you could send him in things at uncommon Seasons and better than the common run. All the people in Scotld: are not so void of taste or their other senses as you incline to think them. It is the not being able to get good things which makes people not have them, and if they whose business should lead them to furnish good things, were at more pains in supplying with good at all seasons and to introduce them to some Customers, it would soon take. I remember since little Garden Stuff was to be got to buy at Eden:<sup>2</sup> and Gardiners said why shall we raise

<sup>1</sup> An early notice of the rise of gardening for the Edinburgh market in a district that has long been noted for this industry.

<sup>2</sup> Topham's *Letters* from Edinburgh (1774-5): 'The little variety of fruit

them ; nobody will buy them. The moment they were to be had every body bought. Now it is all one, a Cabbage is a Cabbage, a lettuce a lettuce, any kind of Salad is a Salad, pease are pease old or young, an apple an Apple, and so on, no difference made between good or bad of a kind. All this is as wrong and as little true as the saying at first, why shall we raise Garden stuff, nobody will buy. People would presently come to distinguish as they came in to buy when Garden stuff was first introduced. But our people are lazie and saying no body will buy and no body will distinguish is chiefly owing to the want of activity, Industry and care in providing at all or good of their kinds, and bustling a little to introduce and get Customers at first. We are glad of all excuses for our sleeping on in poverty and our old jog trot. How shall things be carried to Eden: and nobody will buy in the Country are other very good difficulties and convenient enough excuses, wherein excuse is wanted. I don't know if you have a Carrier at Orm: but I am convinced one who understood his business, would get Employment for a Cart such as the Higlers<sup>1</sup> to the Gardiners who come to Covent Garden use. They would carry things cool and clean and one man with two horses in such a Cart, would carry in as much as four Carriers with 4 horses carry in our common way<sup>2</sup> and if you put your things up in Baskets carefully as Gardiners do here, by which they 'l not be wet, Bruised or Broiled in the Sun the Cart being covered as the Garden Stuff commonly is, in carrying to Eden. Even care in this will make them fresher and better than what is now to be had there. Or a man of your own with a horse as we got things to the Admt. may go in once or twice a week the year . . . and bring you always out ready money, or the

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which this climate brings to perfection is the cause that the inhabitants set anything on their tables after dinner that has any appearance of it ; and I have observed at the houses of principal people a plate of small turnips, which they call 'neeps,' introduced in the desert, and eat with as much avidity as if they had been fruit.'

<sup>1</sup> Pedlars, costermongers.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence that wheel traffic was known but little used for long distances, and that horse pack, with panniers or creels, was the usual carriage, as in the days of Henryson's *Fables*. Till well into the century coals from Tranent, hay, and other country produce reached Edinburgh in this fashion. See also p. 55—'Go in to Leith—take a cart with you, or horses to get all safe out.'



like from other markets in the neighbourhood with more common things, tho' in time you may even find enough for a Cart of your own. I am also convinced a larger demand than you think of, may be raised in the Country and Town itself in a very little time, if plenty is to be had at reasonable prices. One man might have raised three times what your father had in his Garden or did not deserve bread for his work, and if he raised three times what he did, he could have sold for the half of the price and have got one third more money than he did. But our narrow Idle way is to work only a third of what any diligent man might do, keep up the price of every thing by which we get few customers, rather than have three times as much to sell, by which we can sell cheap, make sure of customers and make more profit. As I mentioned Quinces I think you could not miss good of either side the hedge at bottom of the Garden. If of north side they must be out of reach of being shaded by the hedge, near which what likes a shade should be, such as Raspberries. I am almost sure Quinces would be demanded, for many go from hence every year, and even the difficulty and expense attending the carriage, makes them less used than if more easily come at. A good bearing Quince tree takes no more room than a pear or an apple of the most common kind and yet the fruit of it will bring more money. Besides having uncommon things brings customers to take of the common. Espalier hedges keep your ground warm, take little room and dont cover undergrowth. Take care and don't spare pains in first planting of fruit trees and preparing and mixing the soil right for them. You can't have them good without care at first. You saw that at Tottenham, and now I am assured they have the profit, by all their fruit that I was at pains about, being remarkably good. What you do, let it be thoroughly well; what is well done will pay, when what is sluberd will yield accordingly. Be at pains in getting the best Seeds you possibly can and the seeds you raise will repay, besides the crops being better. Get good kinds of fruit. I don't know if the latest pears will answer upon espaliers or standards. I shall be glad to see some draught of what you propose to take in. Tho' you don't bring all in at once and only add every year, you may make your



design larger than what you can bring in order for two or three years. Trench and ridge well up against Winter and you can't begin too soon in laying mix't stuff into heaps in order to turn and sweeten soil for use ag<sup>t</sup> planting time. Want of dung will be another excuse. We are at little pains in taking care of keeping together or right managing of what we have or might make. We also starve our cattle by which we lose the half of the work our horses could do, and a great deal of the milk our cows would give and lose the dung they would make.<sup>1</sup> A horse will do a great deal of work if well fed and fairly dealt by, and a Cow would pay in milk for the difference. Such as you who keep only one Cow, should sell off your Cow when she fails in her milk and buy in one new calved. Feed well which your Turnips and other things can help you to do, and so have always a Cow in full milk, which would pay. A little help of Hay from your Walk<sup>2</sup> would be of service both to horse and Cow in Winter, and a feeding of corn would enable your horse to go out with a load to a market and carry your coals, go in a plough or do any other thing in an afternoon, if our men were not lazy and slow and our horses starved, by which they make a day's work of what might be done of a morning. Every thing that can serve in any way for bettering the ground should be taken care of and the turning up our ground for sweetening and freshening would much help its answering. You may have heard Cuff<sup>3</sup> say, he took care to have something for the market every day the year round. I am sure you may have something for the market of Eden: or other places about, several times every week the year round, besides answering demands at home. But you must exert yourself in raising and afterwards in disposing of what you raise. Get over difficulties which by a little thought and activity in executing, you'll find are not insurmountable, and never grudge laying out a penny when you see a probability of 2d. returning. By the course of nature your father can't live long, prepare

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<sup>1</sup> Defoe writes to Harley, Earl of Oxford, on the same sensible lines.

<sup>2</sup> The baulks or narrow strips between the rigs of arable land, which were so numerous when the township was divided up among the crofters in the run-rig. From this passage the horse rather than the ox was used for labour.

<sup>3</sup> The market gardener at Tottenham, where Bell had been a learner.

things and advance by degrees while he lives or while he inclines to be doing any thing himself, tho' he should not take your advice in every thing, and when I see you next I shall possibly propose to you what may make you incline to reside there and do my business and push your own on strongly at the same time, for my chief view in the many advices I give to people at Orm: is to advance their own thriving. Tho' sometimes all I can write or say is little regarded, I need not tell you this is designed for yourself only. This was begun on Saturday. Tell Brodies friends he sets out to-morrow. I have written again and again to advise them to stock him well with good well seasoned timber, without which he can't make good work, and he will get a bad character at first setting out. Their not doing this cleverly will lose him much of the advantage of what he has learned. There is as I am writing, a Gardiner who has ten acres of Garden Ground at the lower end of this Town, with his Cart at my door with all sorts of Garden stuff. I talked to him just now. There are also a great many who bring every day from London to my door. Young Beans and Pease are 6d. pr. peck, fine Collyflowers at 3d. a piece, Cabbages at 2d., Goss<sup>1</sup> Letuces at 1d a piece. The Garden here pays 40 Sh: pr. Acre rent, which you know is at the rate of 50 Sh: for our Acre. He pays the tenth to the Parson, high parish and Road taxes, 6 Sh: for every load of dung, 18d. a day to every labourer. I need not mention his other charges he is at more than with us, and I assure you his soil far from being so good, and he buys or carries in a cart, every drop of Water he uses. The failure must be in our peoples working, diligence care or some other neglect, otherwise a Gardiner with us could afford things for half price, and get as great or more profit as this one does, for every thing costs him more than double. This seems a demonstration to me, but I will mentain no argument to which a good answer can be given, tho' till I get one, I shall ascribe our not succeeding in many things as I think we may, to our inactivity and slow thinking and acting, in both which our people proceed as half asleep without any lively spirit in contriving or

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<sup>1</sup> Goss, probably for gross=large.

executing, and I really believe much of this proceeds from our low diet both in eating and drinking. Our common food gives little strength to either body or mind and our malt drink is the most stupifying stuff ever was contrived.<sup>1</sup>

Take care the Weeds don't seed among your Pease and Beans, and if you sow Turnips as soon as you get them off, use your Hoe frequently among them<sup>2</sup> for that same reason. From one root of weed you'll have a plentiful crop if it escapes you. As for the deep running Grasses or Weeds nothing but trenching and Summer or Winter ridging will clear you of them with picking carefully when wrought. Lay every thing into heaps you can draw together of soil kind, it will be useful in time when well cleaned and sweetened by frequent turnings and laying up high, and make all who work with you put to their hand with life. My Bro<sup>r</sup> Patrick<sup>3</sup> has sent for the Receipt for Raspberry Rum or Brandy. I fancy he will propagate it. I wish you had been at some trouble in beginning a good plantation of them, for I fancy you will find a demand, and if you are provided, Patrick may help you to Customers when he disperses his Receipt. You might have been a year further advanced in a small plantation for a beginning. A Week of a man trenching and cleaning a Spot of Ground, would soon have been repaid, and you might have had some other crop with them upon the ground, and neither have been the worse for other the first year. You know the greatest demand will be for the Red, but you may have some White. They will yield you more than Wheat and after the ground is once made right, and they right planted, they'll require less Husbandry than a crop of Wheat. You can get Boys and Girls for a trifle to pull them, only a man must pull with them to watch them. You can even get Weeders and Pullers of such things with a little pains, for the half of the expense it costs here.

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<sup>1</sup> A sagacious and far-reaching observation. In 1725 the Edinburgh brewers turned out two thousand five hundred barrels of ale a week.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* the peas and beans. To 'sow Turnips broadcast as soon as you get them off,' is an early example of the intensive husbandry practised now only in the Ayrshire early potato districts. The advice which follows is generations in advance of general farming practice.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick, being an advocate in Edinburgh, could give it a vogue. He was admitted 1728. Note that neither wine nor whisky is ever mentioned.



Think of such things, enlarge your thoughts and ways of acting, and I shall have no doubt of your drawing yourself into good and profitable business, but you must pluck up Resolution; to push it heartily in every part is wanting to bring it to bear.

If I can get a draught from Mr. Gordon,<sup>1</sup> you'll have much occasion for being at the Town of Orm: which will give you an opportunity of seeing things go on at your father's, and also other things there. Write to me particularly who is going on with Building and how they advance. Let me also know when G. Ramsay opens his house, and how he goes on in it and in Brewing, and if his house is in order and his Customers pleased. I have not heard of him for some time, nor a line from Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight for a long time, tho' I continued writing to him long after he had given over answering any, and tho' I wrote of several things required answers in order to my giving further directions. If I gave advices he did not care to follow, it is no excuse for not writing, for I only mention upon such occasions what I think may be of service, but I never insisted upon my thoughts being followed. I design them well, but I leave every man to judge for himself in his own affairs without censuring of them for not thinking in their own concerns as I do. If my advices are not liked the trouble that is lost is mine, and I shall always be glad they do better, without taking ill their not being of my opinion. Since writing I have yours. Show the enclosed as usual, but keep this long letter to yourself. Borrow a Cart from any of the Tenants for the Spars or any other uses without asking my Bror<sup>s</sup> for the least thing or taking any notice when you are to borrow one. None of the Tenants will refuse you one.

Since the want of the draught delays my directing you to oversee the enclosing at the Town I hope you'll be able to do something at the Sneding in the old Swine Ward and by West it, in the mean time. Thin the tops, but leave some branches lower than some you take out to keep the bodies steady, otherwise a small top when the sap is in, may crack and break a tree when frush and full of sap. Top over the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gordon is on the Club List as Lewis Gordon of Gordonhall, the house built for him in the village. The *Farmer's Magazine* (vol. v.) says he was a civil engineer brought from London to lay out the village. See Introduction, p. xxxvi, and p. 42.



branches you leave to check their running too long and carrying too much sap to them and hinder its running up. This will draw the Sap up and not intercept it all or too much of it, but dont let too much weight of top be just at Top for fear of Winds. If one shall suffer by winds before winter makes them tough and thickens the juices, you know the noise will be made. Leave the Branches of West or South West sides and thin the tops most of East sides. Let Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: observe this also in the young Woods.

Hampstead, 3<sup>d</sup> June 1735.

## IX

No date,<sup>1</sup>

CHARLES,—Tell Alex<sup>r</sup>. Wight the last I had from him was of 28<sup>th</sup> Jany. and I have wrote to him and also to John Christie of several things to which I have had no answer. I fancy I have tired them both, and I am not surprised at it having wrote so much to both.

Does ever Mr. Hepburn come to Orm: now; I never hear from him. Don't say any thing of this to him, but let me know when he does come, and if he looks at any thing and what he does or says.

I am promised some Portugal Onion Seed which I am assured is good. I believe it will be nearly a month hence before I can get it to you, and as that will be late, I don't know if you may not keep some of it till next year, but do in that as you think best. I think at least you may prepare a little bed at the house and another at the Town, and sow some at each place this season tho' late. You know they require good ground and well wrought espically if heavy ground, so dung each and work it well now, and work it again when to be sown. A little pidgeon dung mixed with Ashes laid thin a top now and let lie till the Seed comes, and then the surface pricked over before sowing about 3 inches deep to mix the dressing with the earth I believe will do well. It will add to it if the beds are dunged now with fresh dung but deep enough not to

<sup>1</sup> Probably written about the same time as No. VIII., 3rd June 1735; which see for 'nor a line from Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight for a long time,' and below, in this letter, 'as that will be late' ('a month hence'), and compare the reference to 'my Brothers' with p. 20.

be touched by the pricking, that an inch of earth may remain above the fresh dung and between it and the Seed when down. That will occasion a ferment, the dung will keep the mould open and hollow below and altogether may give you good Onions, the best of which you may keep for a stock of good seed. The riddling on this dressing now will take the fry heat out of the pidgeon dung and ashes, before the seed gets to you. Most of the Onions in Scotld: are of the strong Strasburg<sup>1</sup> and Sure some will be wise enough to prefer the Portugal if they can get them; but you may have both according to peoples tastes, and next year you may sow the rest and get a stock of seed which few but yourself will have. There is a great deal in good seeds and having well wrought and well dressed ground for them.

Show the enclosed to my Brothers as soon as you can. Keep this to yourself.

## X

. . . I design to have the Haining gone through in Dec<sup>r</sup> <sup>2 Sept. 1735.</sup> and Jany. Feby. will be a throng planting time in Red Meadow and Hedge Rows. So I would have all the Nurseries transplanted and ground ridged up for Seeds ag<sup>t</sup> Spring, presently after the Wood is planted. This is a general view of what I propose for next Winter. I need not tell you that there is a great deal must be enclosed about the Town, or repeat my desire that it may be pushed on without loss of one hour that can be gained.

Let me know how every house in the Town is advanced, what is done, and what doing to each, which has been in hand this year or preparing to be undertaken. Has Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb:<sup>s</sup> son and the man came with him, begun any business and how do you hear they are like to do. Does Douglas in Brown's house carry on any business and to any purpose. Do things still promise well with G. Ramsay. Has he much Company and does his drink still meet with approbation. Is there more business at the Mill than formerly and does Alex<sup>r</sup> seem to keep her constantly going. Let me know such things particularly

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<sup>1</sup> See also p. 2.

or what else of the like nature you think I may incline to be informed of. Does Brodie get any business out of the Town and does he seem to give satisfaction in his Work to such as employ him. Inform me freely of such things that I may guess at what is doing, how things go on, and how people seem to aim at thriving, that I may know how to carry things on by the success in what is done and doing. Without full information there is no laying down further measures right; So don't conceal good or bad from me. Has Mr. Hepburn<sup>1</sup> sold all the Wood he proposed to cut this year or how much do you hear has he remaining uncut. Do you hear if his Bark went well off. Do you know if M<sup>rs</sup> Cokburn has made any use of a plank of Wood I sent her with G. Ramsay, and whom she employed in working it, and whether it is said to be well made or not. Pray is there any use made and what, of the Stable and Barn by Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb:<sup>s</sup> house? In what condition are they? You may go that way and look upon them under some pretence and let me know.

\* Do the plants thrive under Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb:<sup>s</sup> which were planted last year. What kinds do you think any supply of will there be wanted. Do you look and see what number and kinds of trees stand in the way of carrying two Rows of Beeches all the way west from the line of the South Garden Wall and the Row of Beeches South of it, which was planted last year, all the way west to the road above Runshy hall. I mean that stand in the lines or within them so as to hinder the view<sup>2</sup> from east to west or disturb the rows to be carried on all the way West. Get

<sup>1</sup> James Hepburn, younger of Humble, was an original member of the Ormistoun Society. Humble is higher up the Tyne valley. Lady Humble, a daughter of Johnstone of Warriston, is often referred to in *Andrew Hay's Diary*, 1659-60 (Scottish History Society). During her early widowhood Hay was her good friend. Her husband was Thomas, son and heir of Sir Adam Hepburn of Humble, a Senator of the College of Justice, while Janet, a daughter of Sir Adam, was John Cockburn's grandmother. His grand-parents were married in 1648. 'Sir John Inglis and John Hepburn of Humble were the subscribing witnesses to the new lease of Murrays (Muirhouse) farm, granted (1718) to Robert Wight' (father of Alexander of the Letters). 'They were invited on this occasion by Cockburn that they might, as landlords, be animated by his example.'—*Farmer's Magazine*, v. 133.

<sup>2</sup> The two rows of beeches were to form an avenue, or rather a vista, a great feature of the early planting days. It is referred to again as 'the long Walk' (p. 53), and still stands. See also No. XIII.



Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: some morning early before others get up and value them without taking notice to any, and let me know the kinds, numbers of each kind and their values. I mean from the South West Corner of the Garden Wall all the way as far as the planting goes to the Road leading down to Runshy hall, for I think if I can have time, I will plant these two Rows this Winter and cut down about Christmas every stick that stands in the way west of the Garden Wall, either of the trees to be planted or between them. As I have so much ditching in hand, I won't make the addition to the Nursery till next year, but if I can I will plant out the Walk west. How many Beeches will it take for the two Rows. I have forgot. Read this Letter over particularly and give me full and distinct answers to each article, looking it over again to see that you omit nothing.

What is above was begun on Saturday and the rest of it written last night before the Post's coming for fear of Interrupting. I have your's of 26<sup>th</sup> last month. I am sorry so little is done to the Roads and I fear the cutting of the Hills and making the Bridge can be of little Service this year for the reason above given. I inclined to have carried all straight on and not have jumped from one thing to another. I never saw work go right on where they did not keep steadily to one thing till finished. I do think it would have been no great work if the people upon my own Estate had made in one season all the Road<sup>1</sup> from where left off last year, as far down as you tell me it is done, without help. It is well done so far as they have gone. I fear the Bridge and the Hills being spoiled this Winter if not very completely finished, and no cart can get at them from either hand in Winter. If care is not taken to gather Stones upon some of Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's fields near by for the Road of south side, down to Runshy hall, before the corn is sown again, we shall have none in the Spring without going a great way for them, and so if none are gathered upon David's ground for mending at back of the Haining we shall have none, at least none near, for next Summer's Work of that side. I

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<sup>1</sup> Feudal services from the tenants included the making of roads. Cf. *corvée* in France. A sentence later on shows road-making material was obtained from the fields.



shall be glad to find myself mistaken and desire to be set right if I am. When the new Houses are started in the Town, people who pass will begin to think us in earnest about improving of it and by degrees they'll see one thing after another got over, which to narrow thinking people seemed Impossible, and to which they never had sense to carry their short sighted eyes. I was sure the managing of the Banks of Red Meadow right, would answer as you tell me it has, and its being kept dry will show another Impossibility got over. If the Banks of the great cast<sup>1</sup> which was made some years ago are well made up of our side, it will also keep the meadow which W<sup>m</sup>. and T. Landels had quite dry. I wrote of this early and if you observe my Letter I never proposed a great work of it or casting up all the mud from the bottom of that cast but only making up such places as had fallen down of where low of our side, and as I had a great deal of ditching in view I wrote of this as I did early, to have it by hand before we could do other things, but now (as is our way) it is delayed and so must either not be done or take up the men which should and now may be employed in other business. This way of doing is most common with us who have an aversion to look forward and so it happens in most of our undertakings that we advance slow and never do things in time. I shall be glad you get more men soon for let us do our best we shall fall far short of what might have been done. We are now enclosing the Red Meadow when the corn being cut would have allowed of ditching in Stubble land and if the Banks of the cast are made up, that is another work which might have been out of the way. All now to be done is to make up by future diligence as much as possible. When you have enclosed the Red Meadow begin at east end of Porteous' land and ditch cast<sup>2</sup> in a line with Christie's and Porteous' till you come to the Road which is to go down of West side the Red Meadow. I need not tell you that this must be double as it is both to keep out

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to a wide, open ditch. Deep tile-draining, as we know it now, was nowhere practised till long after this period. The ditches in the Letters were merely to give additional height to the fences against cattle. The frequent reference to 'wet places' shows that the land was then undrained.

<sup>2</sup> 'Cast,' a slip for east.

and keep in. Let it be well and neatly done, the Ditches to batter well of the side of the Banks and the Banks also to batter<sup>1</sup> well that the weight may lie in the centre of the solid ground between the ditches. Let the middle of the Bank be in a line with Christie's house that the white thorn hedge and Hedge row Trees may run just in a line with that house. I name that house not knowing exactly if Porteous' house is in a line with it or built further in to the South. When the north side of that road comes to be done, I will have the hedge a top and trees run in a line with Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's Garden Wall. I shall afterwards order where to begin it. I shall expect the other draught to be returned in a Post or two, for this is really so small that I shall commit some mistake in marking any thing upon it. Do what I marked upon the other before you begin at Porteous'.

Hampstead, 30 Aug<sup>t</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Sep<sup>t</sup> 1735.

## XI

These 20 Sept. 1735.

are only thoughts of mine of which if you are the better I shall be glad of it, but I am far from expecting any shall follow my ways of thinking in their own concerns further than they think it right and not wherein I am wrong or better methods can be found. I have your's of 12<sup>th</sup> just now; I am not to plant the Red Meadow but to enclose it for keeping in as well as out, and the as you drew it. I can't write much just now, but shall write to M<sup>r</sup> Hepburn about the Oaks. My last will explain the Elms now wanted, since I don't plant the Red Meadow. Now that harvest is over, I hope you have ditchers enough. You must be sensible there is a great deal to do and now is the time to push. I think Brodie is a fool to himself if he can mend the pump in letting her stand unmended, to have it said of him, that he has failed in performing of it, which will be blown up to his prejudice with all the Industry possible. He should guard against giving

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<sup>1</sup> The inclination inwards, given to a wall or dyke in building it, clearly showing that a ditch meant a wall.

people such a handle to blow upon his Character far and near You see how soon it got this length. Tell him what I say.

If you think to improve any of your ground in Garden way of any kind. Good plants of the best kinds and good Seeds of all kinds are to be got. Bad is as expensive as good, but good fruits and Garden Stuff will sell best.

20 Sep<sup>r</sup>. 1735.

Bid Miles<sup>1</sup> let me know how many fathom of Rock the mine is to be cut through and the time he thinks it will take, and how they advance.

Show the enclosed, and be sure both Patrick and Mr Hepburn do see it. If Patk. asks you to explain the affair of no man's pleasing but Hunter, and also the reason for the men being so long about the fences, I think a cart might have been lent between Yokings for now and then carrying a load of rice, but things are made tedious to pretend to prove from thence, that I am not able to carry on more business at less expense than was done when I did not direct myself. I dare say had you spoke to any of the Tenants near, they would not have refused in turns to have brought a cartful of rise<sup>2</sup> if it had been gathered and ready just to be loaded when the Cart came. Half an hour in this way would have loaded it and brought it from the Wood and laid it down where wanted or as near as the danger of spoiling the grass would have allowed, and would have forwarded the business much. You see trifling delays are used to disappoint, so do you exert yourself to prevent my suffering by them, and let me know when you find them attempted. You may seem concerned that I blame you for not getting one in Hunter's Room. Let me know the true reason for Hunter's being endeavoured to be kept. If you are asked why your two men went away, and you found difficulty in getting others, you may freely tell that tho' I liked their working and thought they wrought strongly both when by

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<sup>1</sup> Miles managed the coal-mine, still worked. See p. 97 for an early trade dispute.

<sup>2</sup> Tops of felled trees, or prunings, used for fences.



them and when I observed what they had done while I was from them, yet they could not please when I was gone and got so many names that they would not stay, the hearing of which made others disappoint you after you had engaged them. I think this was the chief reason you gave me, and it is right that Patr: and Sir John<sup>1</sup> should know it, for you may believe that you was complained of to them upon that occasion as you know you was to me. The blame now for a man not being got in Hunter's room, will also be laid at your door. So if you won't lay the Saddle on the right horse, you must take it upon your own back, and well will you deserve it. I assure you I shan't help to take it off if you tamely like to bear it.

## XII

CHARLES,—I had just sent a letter for Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight to London when I received yours of 18<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup>. I don't know if I shall get this thither to the Post to night for our post who comes here afoot twice a day and returns at last to London may not care to go this night, for I have never seen more Snow fall than does at present. It comes seasonably before Christmas is quite over. I don't know what way you took to convey your Letter which has made it come so late to me. I never heard of your being to return, and much less of your being returned, from any but Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight, and my reason for not answering a Letter I had some months ago, was that I found you had been told a story in which there was not one word of truth and I am sure none could with any foundation either tell you that I would be angry or satisfied with your return. Your going down<sup>2</sup> discovered that the design had

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<sup>1</sup> They acted as Cockburn's factors. Sir John Inglis here married John Cockburn's sister, Anne. An earlier Sir John Inglis (d. 1689) was the first husband of Anne Houston, who, when a widow for the second time, was Adam Cockburn's second wife. Her daughter, Jennet Inglis, was John Cockburn's half-sister, and became the second wife of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (*Memoirs*, Scottish History Society). Baron Clerk was also a member of the Ormistoun club, as himself an ardent 'improver.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Your going down' (to Scotland). This, about Bell's having been in London and strained relations, offers material for an ingenious puzzle.



been privately carried on for former years for defeating all I had done and preventing my being able to do more in a way which I thought was for the improvement of the Estate. What has changed the notions against planting and taking care

I can't tell: I have not endeavoured at it, for I hate wrangling and when I can't make a Shoe do I choose in the easiest way to let it go down in the heel. Your stay while this humour lasted against the very thing for which you was there, would indeed not only have been a most useless expence but a most provoking one, for it was impossible to conceive any thing but disappointments difficulties and objections which no pleasure or profit could make worth the while to struggle against. How matters stand now I know not, but if planting and the like

As I neither know what is done, what is proposed to be done or who is to do it, it would be ridiculous in me to order tho' I was disposed as I tell you I am not to do it. I know not what of Nursery kind you have what condition the planted Woods are in, or in what order Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's Wood is which falls next to be cut or how soon it may be ready for cutting so can give no orders if I would. You tell me the Hedge Rows want many trees. I have heard from several of the Tenants that they would gladly have had Trees if they could have got them. All I could do was to send down Acorns for dibbling in and advise them to get Ash . . . and lay it for dibbling next year into the Hedge rows. Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight wrote to me that he would make some ground ready for such Seeds as I should send, so I have sent him some Acorns for trees and a few other Seeds for Hedges. In his last to me which is of 15<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> only three days before the date of yours, tho' I had it ten days before it. He told me you was come, that you wanted no Seeds which surprised me, and I could not well reconcile your not wanting Seeds with your coming or with your desiring some English Elms, for I fancied you would equally want both

in order to carry on the design of enclosing

and planting. However I sent 200 Elms and if I had known a little sooner I would have sent you 2000 gathered out of Hedges, as he will tell you I also sent 100 and odd with the leaf white on one side.<sup>1</sup> They rise high as you know, make a good show with other trees, make fine white Boards and are used by Turners and many other uses. I wrote particularly to Alex<sup>r</sup> about thes<sup>2</sup> Elms, and need not repeat what I said to him. You dont tell me how many English Elms you have laid or how many you have. I wish you will lay all you can by any means. I shall be glad to know particularly what Nurseries of each kind you have the Sizes etc. .

give them their last sneding and clear the bodies of the trees a good way up, and cut away such trees entirely which will not be good to give more air to the others, and also that the others may have three years of all the sap which the roots can afford. Don't let him be sparing either in cutting out such trees or in sneding up the bodies of the good to a height. I know he is sparing in this way, but if he can be prevailed upon to do it right for or 4<sup>3</sup> years growth where thus thinned will mend the Trees much. Sneding or cutting out when the Wood is within a year or two of cutting leaves an eye sore and the trees have no time to gain by growth. I wish he will go presently through one year's cutting. I mean what will be for cutting in the Summer 1737 and so next year for 1738 and so on. I would have you go a little now and then to him and see that he is not sparing but clears well up as he goes. This month is the proper time, and against peeling time let him do the like to the Oaks in that same Hag. What Trees you take out of the Haining or other places where thick

<sup>1</sup> This must be the service or sorbus tree (*pyrus torminalis*), for which Herts is famous. It grows well in towns and has a fine show of foliage. The 'Turners' are specially the muggers who made wooden vessels, in general use then.

<sup>2</sup> A slip for 'these.'

<sup>3</sup> This undated letter belongs to December 1733 (1737 - 4 = 1733).

must be carefully taken up with good roots and should be done soon lest a dry spring should kill them. . . .

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## XIII

Augt. 1739

CHARLES,—I hope you secured Laborers to widen the leed<sup>1</sup> and that they are good Workmen and have been kept close to it, in which case they must be well advanced in it. I gave J. Dods directions about getting Stones brought for Altering the Bridges, they should be carried before the Roads break. Tell Kinghorn and Wilson that they must not lessen the number of hands at Mr. Gordon's Work by putting hands to the Bridges or any other Work for me, or any other person. If any of them come to the Bridges they must add one in their room to Mr. Gordon's. If they do otherwise I am resolved to employ others for the future. This I told them and also told J. Dods to see to this, for I would not have Mr. Gordon disappointed in getting the roof put upon his House before Winter, as it will be a great loss to him if it is not. I have also ordered J. Dods to assist him in getting his Stones carried by my horses, now that they are Idle and I hope well mended. In time of Harvest Carts may be borrowed for my horses, when Leading time comes on Carts won't be to be had. Tell J. Dods to think of this and lose no time. I gave J. Dods orders about the Cattle and the management of the grass for them so as upon no account any kind shall go into the Pidgeon field or the two east of it till I order it. I hope the pidgeon dung was all sown soon after my coming away. Inclosed I send a List of trees for the Wood this year. Mr. Hepburn said he knew of Oaks; let 1200 of them be got. I believe they'l be fully as tall as any in the Nursery. Pick out 1000 of the tallest in any of the Nurseries, and I think if you cannot get

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<sup>1</sup> Canal formed off a stream to drive a mill wheel. Alexander Cockburn leased the mill. See p. 33.

so many of a good size, you may find up and down the Wood east of the Stone Park 100 or 200 such as you got last year, that are overgrown by others and can't overtake their neighbours and so will be lost where they are. If you don't take particular care your men will take up all trees with too small roots. The hurt we have every year sustained by this stupid neglect and their obstinate insisting upon cutting the roots too small and too near the trees in taking up and with the making the holes too small for planting in, you may be sensible of. By this and want of care in laying of the roots right and covering of them carefully at planting, we have lost thousands of trees and all the expense and trouble of planting every year. Saving pains in doing things completely right at once, has cost me very dear and the like practice will ever occasion disappointment and is throwing away money instead of saving. Attend closs at all planting and then you'll see them lay their roots carefully and that every fiber is carefully covered with the finest of the stuff and that the holes are widened if not made large enough at first. Better plant the one half only, than double the number to no purpose for want of care. If you meet any that have been taken up with small roots, don't lose time in planting them, throw such away directly, and don't spend time only to deceive yourself and me in fancying we have more planted than can answer any good purpose. I have said when present and have wrote so much that one would think I needed say no more, but as I know the obstinacy of our people in their neglecting to do things right even when I am present and the common practice in foolishly doing every thing by halves and so losing their time and money in whole or in part under a notion of saving. I again recommend care and doing every-thing you do for me of every kind, completely well and never to go into the foolish way of thinking as they do, that when they neglect what is necessary to make a thing answer right—Oh! it will do well enough for all that. The chief thing from which most of their undertakings fail in whole or in part. Don't let any business of mine fail so, I desire. I shall be very angry after all I have said if I find they do. The Firs in the Wood and in the two places planted last year must be planted out by middle Oct<sup>r</sup>. Let Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: and Robertson sned the



Allers and all other unsned trees at foot of the Wood east of the pan Meadow. They'll get rice there for what follows. Let a rice dyke<sup>1</sup> be made round the firs behind Runshy hall and that planted with good firs out of the Nursery. Do the like west in Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's ground. Let the Stake and rice be at such a distance from the trees that tall cattle cannot reach over to touch them. Let your men pull up the dead and make holes for the new at leisure when you can spare them. The holes for all the firs must be made by end of next month that they may be planted from 10<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup>. The rest of the holes in the Wood and the trees planted in them may be done at times when convenient any time before Christmas. The Oaks in the walk over against the Church may be supplied, as also the Beeches of West Byres side any time before Christmas, and the Beeches in the long walk towards Cleekhim in, but the sooner the dead trees in all the above places are pulled up and new large holes are made the better, that the stuff taken out may sweeten. Let me know how many Oaks for the above walk will be wanted, also what Beeches for the Walk and what over against the Church, and how many to finish the Walk upon David's ground West of the bottom to carry it to Preston Hall<sup>2</sup> march and if you think you can get enough large enough.

I design to try to Improve the fruit in the Garden and also to have all kinds of Garden Stuff in perfection. In order to the last, let me know what seeds you'll want, and if you know any I can trust to get them from, good, and begin you presently to ridge up and dung all your ground as the present crops come off and clean it of roots of Weeds the best you can, for it wants to be strengthened sweetened and cleaned. Lay it as high as you can and don't spare dung, nor pains about clearing of it from Weeds. You'll have good dung in the yard and in the hot beds and you'll soon come to make more as you'll want it. What ever you found last year yourself short of for the Kitchen, provide whether I come to use it or not. By east

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<sup>1</sup> Rice or rise (Ger. *Reis*), old word for twig or branch. Rizzer-berries are garden-currants. 'Cherries on the rise,' is an old London street cry. 'A rice dyke,' or 'stake and rice fence,' is made of posts with twigs interlaced.

<sup>2</sup> Preston Hall adjoins the Ormistoun barony on the west.

the Yew Tree<sup>1</sup> thin out many of the fruit trees now, for their thickness hinders their bearing, gives no room for undergrowth and spoils all that you sow or plant. I'll put in Dwarfs by degrees for fruit. Ridge up what was dunged last year in the Nursery till it is time to plant it with other Nursery. Take out a great many of the trees upon the Stable Wall in the little Garden<sup>2</sup> and spread upon it the trees you keep and prune them right for Bearing. Open all their roots well and cut them off that run too far forward beyond the broad border. Take away or lay in heaps the earth you take out after being exposed for all Winter it will do well for other uses. But get a good stock of good fresh earth to put round and next the roots against spring and you may make up the borders with what has been most exposed of what shall be taken out now. By this method you will do great service to the fruit, and you may have good salading upon the Borders next Summer. Trace the roots of the trees you leave and cut away any go down as well as all come near to the Water table for their roots to run into. You may remember I did so by the Wall trees at Tottinham, and I have been assured they produce vast quantities of excellent fruit. Pull out all the roots of the trees you cut out and leave the ground open a good way down, and in the Spring fill it up with fresh mixt with what has been most exposed of the old and has been well turned in the high heaps you lay it in now. I told you about Archichokes. Make three rows. Trench them deep and don't spare dung—Cows dung is not the worst for this. Fill up with good, well wrought strong earth, and plant about middle Oct<sup>r</sup> Strong plants. Dung each round presently to keep out frost and that the rains may wash the substance of the dung down about the roots. Against the spring dung between the rows for Colli-flowers or some such stuff for the Kitchen. Make 3 rows more in March in the same manner. Leave as much ground out in the East end of the little Garden pulling out the deepest of the artichoke roots now, when you trench, ridge and dung it, which will make it good for Kitchen Stuff of any kind. Your

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> Now the Old Garden, immediately behind the present stable and court. Introduction p. xx.

ground is all very foul. You must be at pains in cleaning and working it over to bring it to rights or it never will give you good crops of good things, for it is now mostly poor, bound with Weeds and for want of frequent thorough opening and working. Your Gooseberries and Currants are degenerate and become small, pull up some of the old. Make the ground right and plant good young plants. Dress up and put into order your Raspberries. Put every thing in order that what you have may be good of its kind. Your Wall Trees are in general in very bad order. Many must be pulled out, and what remain must be right . . . the soil about their roots and their roots must be taken care of.

Scarsborough,<sup>1</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> 1739.

#### XIV

9 Octr. 1739. CHARLES,—I forgot in my last to put you in mind of the Artichokes. I hope you have put them by hand and are at the planting. The open ground about the young plants will let the frost in, so you should cover them well, and soon with dung above and I hope you did not spare it at bottom of the trenches. Tread the earth closs down to the roots of all trees at planting but particularly of large trees and put the earth carefully and closs to their roots and don't let it be thrown carelessly into the pit and so to leave empty holes about their roots to contain air. Make the mould very fine. Better plant 20 thorough well than 40 in a hurry for dispatch. Haste in Planting may truly be called Fool's haste. The<sup>2</sup> was a Horse-Chesnut planted last year in the bottom upon D. Wight's ground West of the Bank of Hollies and Yews; plant another directly West of it 10 or at most 12 f<sup>t</sup> asunder. Match them as near as you can. If you have none of the size, you'll find one south of it within Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight's Enclosure and if you take it up put in two English Elms, if you have to spare, one in the hole the Chesnut is in and the other about 8 feet either directly

<sup>1</sup> Cf. with this old spelling the *Scores* or cliff at St. Andrews.

<sup>2</sup> A slip for 'There,' but one still hears, 'The wurr,' etc., for 'there was' in dialect.



East or directly West of it, as you find the best place for a hole. This makes not only a variety of trees but a variety in the manner of planting and will show from the Road by D. Wight's Barn Yard. Make the hole and slip in the horse chesnut at once, for if David sees you open new ground he'll think himself undone. I suppose the Beeches of the long walk west of the bottom are a great grievance. We must not vex him too much at once. Remember some time before, not till the throng of planting is over, to sned off every thing over tops the Horse Chesnuts, Sweet Chesnuts and Hollies near the Road at back of the Haining, and sned up the Hollies there to see if we can get them brought up to a good height.

When you have planted about a week at the tall trees, I suppose you'll be able to give a guess how long it will be before you finish the planting all the tall ones I have ordered. Do them before you plant the Wood except the Firs, which I doubt not your having planted before this gets to you. When you have had occasion in taking up of other trees or in looking for them, to see what Chesnuts, Horse Chesnuts and English Elms you find of a size for planting out, let me know that I may give orders where to plant them or to let them stand another year. I still long to hear if the lower part of the Wood is all sned up, or when you think it will be done, and how the planted trees look there and if full enough of all kinds, particularly of Oaks and Firs. Give me an answer to this. The planted trees in it should be well sned up, otherwise the Allers and Birches<sup>1</sup> will overgrow them. It has been a long time adoin<sup>g</sup>, and I suppose they mean to make a whole Year's Work of it, and I expected a great deal more of them. I wrote to J. Dods lately to tell you to put men to making of the holes were wanting to be made in the wood. Let me know when you think that will be done that I may give further orders. If you don't advise me when you think Works will be done I shan't know what further orders to give, so give me always notice in time as near as you can guess.

You can plant the hedge upon the new ditch at the planting South of Runchie hall at bye times and also supply the dyke

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<sup>1</sup> Self-sown wildings in contrast to planted trees.



with all kinds of stuff that is wanting between the middle and East Enclosure and fill up that above the long Meadow as I told you. All the earth about the roots of the Wall trees should be taken out and the roots left bare. That earth if laid in heaps will be good in time for other uses. But at present let planting the tall trees be your chief business and pray forward that. Don't forget what are wanting south of the Garden of the east side and also where room among the old firs there. Laborers should not have the same Wages after Michaelmas as in long days. Dont get triflers and keep the men to work. Be careful in this otherwise they'll run away with money for little work, as good for nothing Laborers or even the best if not checked will do. You know I have frequently complained of triflers and all being Idle and that you take excuses not at all sufficient, for their making little advance. Be sharper upon them and dont let me be abused as I am sure I shall be if you are not. It will be the best way to fix all the large trees first and when all are done to go over them again, tread down the earth, and then fill up and again tread the earth about the roots. Get one man to work with you for a fortnight to help at the planting of the tall trees or in taking up trees enlarging of holes and the like, but I do desire that you will plant all yourself and suffer none to be planted that you do not hold and see the earth put about the roots with a Man's hand to stretch out and keep the roots clear of other to a nicety, being sure they have full room in the pit and that fine earth is put close to every root. When you have seen every root carefully covered another man may follow you to fill in more earth. This care, if taken up right, I hope will save a great deal of supplying next year. As for the Wood, Nursery and Hedges they may be done at leisure as you and your own men can overtake them ; as also the going round and finishing all the tall trees. Give me a Journal of what you do every day, the number of trees, the kinds, and where planted or what other business is done, that I may know as if as near you as I was last year. You'll remember to take off Elm and other plants from Mothers that are rooted,<sup>1</sup> Cover

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<sup>1</sup> It is the shoots and not the mothers or parents that have taken root.

up such as are not rooted and lay others, letting me know what numbers you take off, and lay as many as you can of Elms. Bring the Nurseries out of the Garden as far as the Nursery ground will hold, keeping always some of the Nursery ground for dunging in the Spring as last year. But put the planting of the tall trees by hand first, as above. Let Alex<sup>r</sup> and Robertson keep as close to the Wood as making good necessary fences will allow off. Should any thing hinder them in the low wood, and yet allow of their working in the upper part where they went through last, beginning of Summer, let them go to it till weather allows of their returning to the lower Wood, for I want to have both done this Winter. Do you go to them sometimes and where they don't do thoroughly right let them go over it again for we can't be going over the same wood every year or two. I recommend this the more particularly because I know Alex<sup>r</sup> will only half do if not forced to do right when doing.

In this and my former letters I have given you my views of work to be done in the Garden and planting for first part of this Winter. Save me the trouble of repeating by your reading my letters over when you are in doubts, or any thing you don't find plain and distinct let me know, that I may explain it before you make mistakes. Will G. Ronaldson<sup>1</sup> or any others want trees for ditching this Winter? Remember a Shrub or two up near to Alex<sup>r</sup> Cok:<sup>r</sup>s. Where the ground is wet drain off the water if you can and raise them in planting. I also spoke to you of a dry knowe further down of west side and one a little above the Well and other places in that ground, I desired some trees to be removed and others to be put in.

We have now had some days of fair weather with cold north east Winds, good for the Wheat Seed,<sup>2</sup> but as this has been a late harvest I reckon our farmers won't consider the time of year it is, but will only reckon that they are to begin so long after Harvest is over by which means they do all they can to have a late Harvest next year. In Herefordshire as I passed the Wheat was strong above ground. Bad weather may make

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<sup>1</sup> 'G. Ronaldson, Dodridge,' a club member. Dodridge Law is the highest eminence in Ormistoun parish, and to the westwards from the Hall.

<sup>2</sup> Note the sowing of winter wheat.

a late Harvest, but late sowing must. The first is only to be helped a little by early sowing, but the last is entirely the farmer's own doing if weather allows of early sowing. Bad damnified Barley of which I fear there will be a great deal may keep down the prices where they don't distinguish, but good well got Barley will be worth money. I reckon few will have good Malt in Scotd: as thrift will make them mix heated Barley with good. Send me the prices of all Grain and how Black Cattle sell at Fairs.

9<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup> 1739.

# XV

23 Feby. 1743.

CHARLES,—As the Weather is not likely to allow Ships to Sail, I have and shall continue now to send a few seeds for you to be doing with upon the first thaw, without loss of time, and if I write to J. Dods<sup>1</sup> I shall enclose such another Cargo to him. Arch: Pringle, who has lost his Wife, talks much of his Onion Seed, so I send you a little of it, to give it a fair trial as soon as the weather will allow of it. Weak ground will produce poor Crops of what should be sown earlier than this season is like to allow of. Things that should have been in the ground the beginning of this month will require help to forward them when late sown. I suppose you want Melon Seeds for making presents of, so you shall have to stock the whole Country, but I never saw any for any thing but pickling in Scotld. The old Seed should be kept before sowing. Their not answering in Scotld: does not entirely arise from the climate tho' there is a good deal in that, but I never saw them right managed nor every thing necessary in order, tho' from the greater distance from the Sun they require the more care in place of the much less they have, from our humour of neglecting something necessary towards success in most things we undertake and saying or acting as if we thought it will do well enough for all that. A little Ignorance is an Ingredient in our not having such things much better than we have. Collyflowers and several other things will want dung and

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<sup>1</sup> John Dods, 'overseer of Mr. Cockburn's country affairs,' on members' list of the club. To him No. XXXII. is addressed.



plenty of water also this Summer, to recover their late sowing or late planting. But pains will be wanting even tho' accidents or seasons require double. For example not only water but soft water will be wanted. Here they are at pains even to soften their water which generally is softer than ours, with us no pains to soften our water which naturally is much harder. To save trouble in that we generally take the saving way and give little water, never enough to any thing, and so comes of such Laziness, for by our saving necessary trouble we generally lose what we do take, from things being good for nothing. Things should not be undertaken or gone through with no profit from half doing and as little Credit. Much have I said, wrote and repeated over and over in my time to this purpose, tho to little purpose as to prevailing with the people to apply to what they undertake with the care and activity necessary for bringing the business to bear to most advantage for themselves. So many Hogs for saving a little Tar are lost in no Country as in our's.<sup>1</sup>

So far I was yesterday when your Bro<sup>r</sup> John<sup>2</sup> came in. He told me your Bro<sup>r</sup> Adam had been with him and went in a Ship sailed some days ago. Craig the Water Man was wrong in not letting me know of the Ship, but I think your Bro<sup>r</sup> might have called upon me and asked if I had any thing to send. If he had I would not only have given him what I have but I would have sent an Express to M<sup>r</sup> Lowther for his Seeds. I have wrote twice to him but no answer. I suppose he delays that till he sends all on board and has let the first ships sail without his Seeds. You see what it is not to think of things in time. You might have had all at once, I am sure I put you in mind in time. Will your Bro<sup>r</sup> Adam make good use of what John has given him? If he does he may get forward in the world. Still if he does not I believe he'l see no more from that Quarter. John says such as he learns Idleness at Edenburgh and are carried from their business by Company and other things there more than they would be in

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to the old custom of smearing sheep, more familiar to Bell than to the modern reader, pp. 70 and 80.

<sup>2</sup> He is called Cousin John, p. 1.



a Country place, a thing one of a small stock<sup>1</sup> can't bear. I believe John won't be pleased if he hears of William's not being sent off to fend for himself, and made go and work or want. He will be uneasy<sup>2</sup> if he is about your father at any rate I am sure a good hired Serv<sup>t</sup> under your Eye will do better for your father and his Ground and Garden, and the true way to bring Will<sup>m</sup> to himself is to let shift for himself and feel his own weight. If he does well possibly John upon finding that may help him but I believe in no other shape will he manage him. We had a thick mist yesterday and the wind for some time S. West, but it came north and then east towards night and froze a little. This day the Wind East but clear and Sun shine.

Saturday, 23 feby. 17<sup>39</sup>/<sub>40</sub>.

## XVI

No date.

CHARLES,—The large prickly Cucumber from Archie Pringle came just as the last post went. I send you some and shall find the rest. I had no letter from you on Saturday as I formerly used to have every Saturday's Post. If I don't know what is doing I can't direct. You may possibly do really better than if I did, but there is something in having a little of my own fancy.

As I frequently meet with Interruptions when I delay writing till the morning of the post going, I write when I can so I begin this. Upon Saturday after Dinner and Company came in, so I begin again this morning, Sunday, tho' I expect to be interrupted soon by the Company that came last night steping in to Breakfast.<sup>3</sup> Last evening we had the finest soft shower could be and this a fine sunshine morning. It actually has made a great change upon the colours of the fields already and it now gives me great pain only to be able to see the fields and the changes every day will make, from my Windows. If this weather holds the Spring will

<sup>1</sup> Of crofter or plebeian origin.

<sup>2</sup> Unsteady, not a diligent worker.

<sup>3</sup> Interesting note of the social customs of the time. Breakfast was something like the modern luncheon. Cf. Fr. *déjeuner*.

advance fast which I foresaw as you may have observed by my pressing you to get hands upon the first change and not losing one hour. Plant first what the sap rises soonest in, or do as is first necessary in Garden and in planting. This I have advised in some of my former and I hope you have considered and are executing accordingly. Not one scrape from Lowther, and a ship was to sail on Friday, of which I advised him some days before. I design if I can spare a servant to send to him tomorrow or next day, that if I can I may let you be at a certainty in this Tuesday's post. Sir Charles Gilmour<sup>1</sup> went on Friday and I believe you may hear from him sooner than I mentioned. I doubt not your having had a good stock of dung one way and another. I hope the pidgeon dung was on the ground and the dung was spread before last night's shower. The difference between its being so and not is great. So fine a going off of a hard Winter, and so growing weather after it, surely never was seen. I only fear if it continues the Spring will run faster than you can get the Nurseries ordered and the hedges and early breaking<sup>2</sup> trees into the ground, for the young in Nursery and particularly the laid English Elms will break soon. Nursery seeds shall also be got in that they may get up this season, and all this besides cropping the Garden and managing the fruit trees and borders. You had timely notice to get hands. I hope you have not lost one hour, for half a day make as great difference just now. The frost must have opened the ground about the roots of trees planting about the beginning of Winter. It must be trod down to them, and when a little leisure some fresh earth may be put to the roots of the old large ones before the Church and on the long Walk, to fasten them well if the earth is sunk about them as most probably it will. Monday. This as yet is a quiet soft growing damp morning, and if the sun gets up it will bring every

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Gilmour of Craigmillar, a member of the Ormistoun Society. He married Jean Sinclair, daughter of Christian, John Cockburn's youngest sister, and of Sir Robert Sinclair of Longformacus (Duns), a member of the club.

<sup>2</sup> Budding. 'Laid English elms' explains a frequent reference to 'elms off the mothers.' They were propagated by shoots from the parent tree being laid underground, and then separated when rooted on their own account.

thing forward. Where still wet, plant upon the surface only taking off and turning the sward turf. I fear the fresh grass will rise in Easter and Middle Enclosure before the Cattle have ate or broke with their feet the old foggage.

The Pidgeons will now get meat for I reckon the farmers are in as great a hurry as you are, and if wise will get in the pease and Oats as fast into the ground as they can. Look frequently to your Men doing right and keep them to their work. If you can overtake the planting of any of the tops of the ditches at the Town the sooner the better, as they'll dry soon. If you find it late content yourself with Oaks in the wet places in the Wood East of the Town. They must be all Oaks and as they must be pretty well shaded and if any moisture at all in the ground in Summer they'll have it, and so may be among the latest you plant of any. What you put into Allan's hag must not be too small low trees for the reasons I gave formerly. They'll be overgrown by the old if not of a good size and so be lost labour, and it will be the loss of so many Oaks also, for which we may find better uses than to be thrown away. Let what you plant in the Wood at the Town be of the largest can be got which require being thinn'd out where you take them from. Let me know what number of Elm plants you take off and plant in Nursery. Don't forget the number of tall I bid you match and plant in Nursery at a distance which will allow of their standing 2 or 3 Years so as to get good roots and good bodies. Tuesday morn: I sent G. Richardson again to Mr. Lowther<sup>1</sup> last night having had John in London in the morning who brought me word that a ship was to sail this day for Leith. I wrote to Lowther that I had expected an answer to some of three Letters I had wrote by the penny post. That he had let several ships sail since the river was open, without sending the Seeds which I had desired him to send, tho' he could not take up trees when the first sailed. That if he let this Ship also go all would be too late and be lost if delayed a fortnight till next ship should sail, so

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<sup>1</sup> The dilatoriness of this smart London merchant should be noted as a *per contra* to the severe things said in the Letters of 'brither Scots.' John is Bell's brother, resident as a market-gardener near Hampstead, p. 51.





in that case I would not pay for what could be of no use, so I gave him this notice in time. He pretended a Boat<sup>1</sup> was gone down and was expected back with the Bill of Lading every Minute, and he would send the Bill to day. It is not yet come; if it does come you shall have it next post. The Wind is now very fair and if it continues the Ship may be soon down, so as soon as you get the Bill send to Leith and don't let the things lie on board to be kicked about or huddled into a Cellar and so the trees spoiled, but as they have been put late on board they may be got soon out, so go in and take a Cart with you, or horses to get all safe out. I ordered 4 Low Morello Cherries and as many tall for Walls. Get the Border and Wall ready for them as I wrote long ago. If you can get plates put under their roots you need not take up such of the trees now for Nursery upon that Wall if they are not in the way where the Cherries should stand. That Border must get a good mixture as it is damp and the soil heavy. If you have no right plates get presently  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a hundred of the large Brown plates<sup>2</sup> such as are upon the Old House. I told you before that I had ordered 2 Mulberries. I hope you have stuff in order for them and plenty of it. Turn chop and make it fine upon receipt of this that it may be in very good order against they arrive. Plant one about the Middle of one of the Plots in the low Garden where the Evergreens are of west side, but have no regard whether it will fall in one of the now Walks there or on the Border, let it be the middle of each, for I propose in time to take out all the Greens<sup>3</sup> now there and lay all flat in grass as the Bowling Green was and leave only the Mulberries standing. Dig the Pits deep and broad, at least 5 feet over and round. The turf or upper soil may be chopp'd very fine and mixed with the stuffs you have prepared to help to fill up, but none of it to touch the roots just at first planting. You must lay plates or thin flags one foot square in the middle of each pit and 2 feet under the surface. Guess the

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<sup>1</sup> A lighter taking goods for the packet.

<sup>2</sup> Large pieces of thin sandstone, used for roofing purposes. They are called 'thin flags' below. The reference to the Old House implies that the new, or modern, mansion was then a-building or finished.

<sup>3</sup> Evergreens, so named above.



best you can what will be the level of the surface when all laid in one flat.

Enclosed I send a Sketch done by guess of the ground as now and showing where I would have the Mulberries,<sup>1</sup> by which you may see what I aim at. Whether we can ever have fruit upon them or not in our Climate I know not. I believe a fair trial never has been made, but I am sure without great care in first planting we never can, and they must have a great deal of room to stretch their roots in a proper soil every way. It is a long lived tree and does not carry fruit when young even here. I believe I mentioned in the direction for the Mixture some ashes, if not, I now recommend some to give it a little heat to help in our climate, or if you have no ashes some sea sand, if to be got or the hottest sand can be got which will keep it open and give it some life, which late things or that want more sun than our climate can afford, can only be helped with and this should be considered and allowances made for it in planting or after management. You will also have two plants of White Sweet Water Grapes, fruit I don't expect, but shall at least have leaves for such uses as they are wanted for. You must make the soil for them light, hot and open, but with some strength not just barren gravel. Loom<sup>2</sup> with hot sand or Ashes is best. It must be sweet and not sour and barren. This moment I have your's of 25<sup>th</sup>. If you'l write as you see I do as I can get five minutes, you'l be less liable to forget. It won't take so much of your time at once and if any thing interrupts you of the night before the post you design to send it by, the less will be my disappointment. Ten minutes of an Evening now and then through the week will leave little to be added the last night but what has occurred that day.

You say nothing of the ever Greens planted abroad. I believe the Vines may do best in the lower Garden, One a

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<sup>1</sup> Said not to be grown now in Scotland. They are an experiment here. The same may be said of quinces, another of the experiments. There is now a fig-tree at the Hall, but it is not mentioned in the Letters. Mulberries are recommended for Bell's father's garden, p. 23. He asks what progress his own, of this letter, are making, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Loam.

little East of Miles' Window to run up upon the house, and  
the other as far west of the Gate from the Closs as that is  
East. . . . .

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> Mar. . . .<sup>1</sup>

XVII<sup>2</sup>

CHARLES,—Upon my coming from London last night, I No date.  
found the enclosed which had come by the penny post some  
hours before. I can't say Mr. Lowther has been very punctual.  
I reckon the Trees and Seeds are lost, for I suppose the Ship  
has been unlivered long before this can get to you, and if found  
at all they 'l have been thrown into some Warehouse and killed  
by the frost or otherwise spoiled. Write to me in what  
condition they are, for it is not reasonable for me to pay for  
what have been lost from neglect of Mr. Lowther. When I  
get a receipt for the Bell-Glasses<sup>3</sup> I shall send it. See they are  
carefully brought from Leith, for the loss of one glass may  
occasion all breaking, and that will not only be the loss of so  
much money but a disappointment from our not having the  
Glasses. Just now the Post has brought me your's of 9<sup>th</sup>.  
This frost has thrown your planting back. The price your  
Ditchers ask shows their Inclination to impose upon me.  
They have been in use to get more than any would have got  
the same work done for. . . . .

## XVIII

CHARLES,—This dry weather has favored you and all 13 March 1740.  
Farmers and others who were thrown behind in their work by

<sup>1</sup> Undated letter. From internal evidence it probably preceded that of 13th March 1740 (No. XVIII.).

<sup>2</sup> This letter evidently follows No. XVI. See p. 54 about the shipping of the stuff.

<sup>3</sup> These are large bell shades, used in gardening to protect individual plants.

the long frost. I wish a good hearty shower to bring away what has been put into the Ground and to take out the coldness still in the air. As the days are long I hope Alex<sup>r</sup> and Robertson advance well in the Upper Wood. If you think a man with them can finish it within the month of April get Ch. Cokburne if you can presently, for that, and hurry them as much as you can consistent with doing the body well up and thinning the tops at same time, to which I desire that you'll give very particular attention, and tell me frequently how they go on, and how what they do looks. Will there not be plenty of Oak and Birch Spars and a good deal of Bark there against May comes three years, after this weeding? Look through it with this view and tell me what you Guess. Are the plants lately sent down well rooted and good, and what age do the Mulberries seem to be of, and of what height are they above the ground when planted?

Where you have planted trees out of Nursery beds you should sow a drill of Turnips between every row the beginning of May to Shade them in June and July and to keep the ground moist. The like when Elms or other Trees are planted now, off the Mothers, and where larger are removed this Spring, you may put larger plants such as Cabbages where room and they don't rise high enough to overtop them. I observe many of our Seeds of trees and the like don't come up the first year and but poor shoots if they do come. This in a great measure is owing to the time of sowing of them, for being put in now it requires a time before they ripen in the ground, swell and get out of their husk and so the natural Spring time is over by the time they have performed this work and so they come up when the natural Spring Shooting is over and only get the later shoot that year, if they come at all, and are weak when Winter comes upon them and the Seeds that lie in the ground till next year are weakened by being in the ground so long. If put into the ground at the natural season which is soon after they are ripe the part to be performed in the ground will be done by the time we generally sow them, and they'll come earlier and get more strength before Winter comes again and most will come away the first Spring. What are in Sand or earth the first Winter should



also be sown in Oct<sup>o</sup> or beginning of Nov<sup>r</sup> in order to be ready to shoot the earlier in Spring, which would give us much more vigorous plants. I am aware of the objections from Mice, and frosts Spewing out. But when I Balance, I incline to think the advancing the growth is to be preferred. As for the spewing out, I think we may by a little pains Extraordinary do a good deal towards curing of that. After sowing and covering as usual I would riddle on a Coat of ashes or of Sawdust which if the Carpenters are spoke to in time they'll save. This coat I would make at least a good inch thick tho' you should rake a little of it off in the beginning of the Spring if you then think it too thick. This will go a great way to save the spewing up and will even do them good by keeping them warm in Winter, which will also help their coming away more vigorously than I observe they commonly do. I am much for quickening the growth of all Nursery plants and giving them more strength than is common in our Country. It not only advances them a year in three at least, but they thrive the better when planted out, having more strength both in body and roots. For this reason I ordered the dunging and taking crops of pease or the like the first year in the Nursery, that the dung being rotted and so meliorating the common soil by mixing some of the substance of the dung with it and then mixing of all together in next working will enable it to give strength to the plants of Nursery trees and advance them in growth without danger of burning the tender fibers by the fresh dung. You saw what the mixture did to the Silver Firs tho' they had been stunted and starved in too poor ground so long. I designed, but it went out of my head, to have ordered them a refreshment the beginning of this Winter. Above Seeds sown the end of the year I would first put thro' the riddle the thickness of a Straw of the dust of pidgeon dung and above that the inch of Ashes or Saw dust as above. All this would nourish and give vigour to the Seeds and prevent their spewing and I believe there would seldom be occasion for raking off the coat, but that might be done or not as we saw in Spring. By such management our Nurseries would advance faster and be every way better. Next as to the Vermin and for that pains must be taken with traps right set, looked to frequently, and the bates



changed to the liking of the Vermin we fear, and several with different bates set round the beds and all contrivances studied for destroying of Moles and Mice. But notwithstanding all care, if we lose some of our plants those saved will be much better, and this not only the first season but afterwards, as once stunted, the frame of their very roots are small and poor. I hope you have sned up the Nurseries in Winter for winter sneding makes clean bodies. Not being able to overtake all obliges me to send<sup>1</sup> sometimes in Summer, but not by choice, for when a Branch is cut off in Summer or when the sap is in motion five or six burst out, but when done before frosts go, the frosts deadens the part before the sap rises. Sneding in Summer does service in hindering branches to overtop or spoil other or to leave less work for Winter, and in case of Bark, can only be done then. But by right they should all be gone over again and the small put out after Summers sneding should be taken off the beginning of Winter, to clean the body of the Tree. Where want Trees, Hollies, Thorns or the like to brush<sup>2</sup> out, May is the best time. If I can get the Upper Wood sned now tho' I wish it could have been done sooner and come in Oct<sup>r</sup> to the Haining as I wish to do, I'll clean up the tall trees of west end near to the Church which were sned in Summer three years ago and are all brushed<sup>2</sup> out to the prejudice of their tops. If the frost has not killed the fruit buds this may prove a good Wall fruit year as it is so late. Crop the Hay yard with what coarse Crop you think will sell best. If I live I design to take up the gravel Walk and put good soil in to make the Wall for fruit of the best kinds that require a good wall and lay that whole Lower Garden in one plot of Grass. Look at all the tall trees planted this year and last, and earth them up where wanted to fasten them well in the ground. Water the beds the Barren Seeds are sown in if you have not rains soon and whenever dry you must repeat this till they come away. They'l want such help to bring them well away. Water the Mulberries sometimes and lay straw or some such thing round to save from frosty nights now and drought afterwards. Take care in Watering the Seed Beds that you may

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<sup>1</sup> Send is a slip for sned.

<sup>2</sup> Make a growth of shoots round the base.

not let the Water run, some cloth or Matt laid on to let the Water run through that gently, I believe is the best way and to Water by degrees not all at once. As to watering of other Seeds or Plants I need not put you in mind of helping them as their<sup>1</sup> is occasion, only if watering is neglected even in this cold weather I believe you'll have some late and poor Crops and Plants that may be made better if minded in time. I never did see such a Winter and Spring as this has been. Nothing green to be got of any kind and few roots at any price, except onions. Money could not buy what was not. Carrots held longest out. We have been so used to open Winters that little care was taken to provide against a hard one, and this cold dry weather brings in very small supplies. A mild day or two last Week with some Sun, made the buds of some Horse Chesnuts near the Window of my room swell a little, but that has been checked by 4 or 5 Days of dark Weather and no Sun but cold N. E. Wind. Even sweet herbs are scarcely to be got yet for any money. You may put 2 Sh. worth of Spinage now, into a Saucer when boiled. No Grass can rise in this Weather and want of rain will raise unequal Crops of what is in the ground. I wrote to know if the Hares<sup>2</sup> had done hurt in Barking or toping trees in Nursery or Wood but you forgot to answer that. Is the Easter Inclosure pretty well dinged? Are the fences there made good, and will it and the Middle one keep in Sheep? Is all the Hay in Middle Enclosure ate up. What Hay is in the loft and Barn? I hope you have supplied the Hedge Rows at the Town with Trees and Thorns. I mean of such Enclosures as are in my possession. We shall lose many of this Springs Plantations if hearty rain dont come. Little showers now when the Sun is high dont go to roots of any thing that have not their roots near the surface. I think you should cut over all thorns in Nursery, transplanted or not, it will make them spread. Do it now if not done, three inches from the ground will give them room to put out

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<sup>1</sup> Slip for 'there.' The winter 1739-40 is notable in history for its severity.

<sup>2</sup> This is the only reference to sport of any kind. All the planting done was to supply timber and shelter to crops and stock. Not till the age of game preserving was there much planting on a large scale. Coursing was at this time the only sport indulged in. See *Diary of Sir John Foulis* (S.H.S.).

a good many side shoots. Do so even by what came up last year and are in Seed bed, Mapples, Crabs, and every thing—for hedges will be the better for being so used just before they begin to shoot or bud out. Let me know what Seeds for Nursery you sow of all kinds with a particular acc<sup>t</sup> of the Nurseries—their height, age, and how long they have stood where they are. I hope you'll have room for dunging more of it against next Winter that at last all may be once got over, and mended by ridging whenever crops come off and dunging. All evergreens are less or more hurt as I hear here about.

13 March 17<sup>39</sup>/<sub>40</sub>.

### XIX

6 May 1740.

CHARLES,—Had I known of your having Vines<sup>1</sup> I would have sent none. I expect no fruit, it was only the leaves I wanted. Where do your's stand for I don't remember having seen them? I wrote last Post to J. Dods about putting my Horses into the Haining rather than Swine Ward, as I believe Water may be got for them in Haining. They won't get safe over to north side if a good Bridge and broad is not made. I wish they don't tumble in to some of the holes that are covered over with Brambles or other Bushes or not to be known till just upon them. Care must be taken in what is above. I wrote fully to J. Dods about care to prevent Infectious distempered horses getting in and how to do if any in shall be taken ill. Also about keeping to the Advertisements and not Blundering as last year about L<sup>d</sup> Oxford's Stirks.<sup>2</sup> Making no particular promises about taking care of one man's Horse or the like for

<sup>1</sup> This should be read with 'White Sweet Water Grapes' in undated letter (p. 56), as having been sent. A healthy vine, bearing a small grape, is still shown, on a cosy nook of the garden wall, as John Cockburn's. Its position corresponds to that indicated at the close of No. XVI.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford, now called Oxenfoord, is an estate higher up the Tyne and to the west of Prestonhall. The scenery of both is lovingly described in Sir Thoma Dick-Lauder's *Scottish Rivers*. 'Oxford gave the title of Viscount to the Macgill family. The Lord Oxford referred to in this letter was Robert Maitland Macgill, whose mother, the eldest granddaughter of the second Viscount Oxford, had married the Hon. William Maitland, younger son of the third Earl of Lauderdale. He had used the title from the time of his mother's death in 1707, and had



I will have no distinctions, every poor man's horse to have the same fare with the greatest, in every respect. The Conditions in the Advertisements<sup>1</sup> are plain and neither want explanations nor additions. They that don't understand them or that want particular promises from my Serv<sup>ts</sup> may walk off with their horses and go where they can have them and do better. I'll Court no Customer either by asking his Horses or giving any promises whatever, further than what I have published in print, and whoever takes upon him to Explain or amend shan't be countenanced or able to make good, and so they may get upon the fingers who add of their own.

I am not surprised with the setting fire to the whins<sup>2</sup> you mention. Whatever can do me hurt gives pleasure to some folks of Orm. I can see more than I talk of, and some who think themselves very cunning are known. It is Impossible but it may be found out who did this, and he who can discover it, or can help to discover it and does not, is glad of it, and would have done the mischief himself could he have done it without being discovered. I well know the dispositions at heart of many to me who have been under the greatest obligations.

I hope as soon as the sneding of the Wood was done, the fence of the Stone Park was gone about, as that is immediately wanted. I fear the . . . Hedges if too close upon the Elm or young Hedges lately planted will stop air and so spoil shoots from the bottom. We had a fine forenoon upon Saturday but afternoon it became cloudy and began to spit rain a little and with it the Wind changed from S.W. to N.E. and from calm the

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voted in the election of Scottish representative peers. His title was, however, challenged, and in 1735 the House of Lords committee of privileges decided that he had not substantiated his claim to the peerage. After this decision he did not use the title, but evidently his neighbours continued it from courtesy, as the date of this letter is nearly six years subsequent to the decision of the House of Lords. He died in 1755.' [For this interesting note I have to thank Mr. W. B. Blaikie.]

<sup>1</sup> This seems quite modern, as well as the taking in of stirks and horses for grazing. Horses were not corn-fed till long after this date.

<sup>2</sup> Introduced into Scotland from the Low Countries in the sixteenth century. They do not grow far above the level of the sea. In the absence of any winter food besides hay, whins played a useful part.



wind rose. It continued so all night with now and then drops of rain but this day pretty good Showers and the wind come cold and full north. However May shine is good and I wish you may have it.

Sunday night. If you have this rain I hope it will do you some good both as to grass, Corn, Garden and Planting. Should warmth come it will do us good. But all Showers now bring N. or E. Winds. I wish to know when the Carpenters are to begin to cut, and I hope they'll sell off and not trifle and lose time in cutting and selling. They may soon dispose of the little they have remaining if they please, and the sooner they'll have their money, a thing they should consider if wise. You tell me you have spoke to them but have you awaked them. If they will still sleep they may depend upon their being waked by Messengers<sup>1</sup> very soon after this gets to you, for Mr. Arbuthnot is determined to convince them that he is in earnest. Let me have a guess how soon they'll be able to sell all. Don't stay for the Saturday's Post, but go about this as soon as it comes to your hand and write by first post.

How late does the Bark commonly sell well? Let me have an answer soon.

So far I went last night. Before I went to bed it began to Snow which it continued doing till 7 this morning and as cold as at Xmas. It is now fair and the Wind rises with Sunshine and the Wind just now at N.W. I don't doubt your having the frost and the cold Winds. I wish you may have had the Wet also. From my Windows I see all the Surry Hills white. The Snow<sup>2</sup> did not lie here, but a little upon north side of Houses and that is gone now at 8 o'clock. If you have had this wet and any calm shall come, I suppose you'll lose no time in fixing of all trees young and old planted this Winter and doing of it right for it will require care to save them notwithstanding their still appearing fresh. The fences of Eastmost

<sup>1</sup> A hint at legal proceedings. Apparently Mr. Arbuthnot had bought the timber to be cut, and the carpenters, his sub-contractors, were dawdling.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 'I never did see such a Winter and Spring as this has been' (p. 61). In Scotland a contemporary says, 'A late winter was accompanied with a terrible frost, which continued to the end of April, no seed being sown till May. Rough and sunless weather prevailed during summer, resulting in a stunted and almost useless crop.'

and Middle Enclosure must be made good and the earth put to the roots of the young hedge; the Wool if any upon it must be taken off and the quicks a little topped with Sheers where their teeth<sup>1</sup> or Wool have touched. Pains this year in saving may prevent a great deal in new planting; besides so many large and small trees and other plants and at least a year's growth of all. I don't doubt your having fully horses enough come in espically at first, as there will be little grass in the Country yet. I wish the planting may be got so up as to hold them till some other gets up. This will be our difficulty, for if any warm weather comes, and you have this wet a week or ten days will bring grass on . . . and other dunged grass and at last upon Stone Park and long Meadow and by . . . the Middle and east Enclosures will get up. As I hope they . . . and some warm Showers if any come will advance them. I wish it can be managed so that the small Enclosures keep them after the planting so as to saue the Pidgeon field till it gets a good bottom and a little up, for if it is let up so as to give good mouthfuls it will hold them till some others are ready. But upon the spot things can be best judged of. There is a great deal in management and forecast to make things answer to best advantage. Bad management will run us out of grass, which will serve well if right managed. Forethought and good management will make a great difference in all business as well as in making the same fields of grass serve more or fewer Cattle.

Are most of the Pidgeons you have let fly white or sandy coloured? I reckon all sowing is over, so it will be a hard time upon the young till the seed of grass or corn ripen which makes me think you should let none fly till middle of July till you think they can have meat when they do fly. Let me know how many you have let fly in all this spring. The cold certainly makes few breed by what might have done if seasonable. They begin soon to breed when appearance of food as the weather will then be warm, but if you let any fly for some time after this they'l starve before they can have food. They whose young you kill now will soon lay again, and I hope you shall have a

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<sup>1</sup> Of the sheep. The 'quicks' are the quick-sets of 'the young hedge.'

good second flight by first of Harvest or corns colouring and then the earliest flyers will get the most strength before Winter. If any near flying now you may let them go, but don't let what are now young fly. As soon as corn offers to colour you may let them fly again.

Dont clean up any trees now that have put out side shoots for ten will come where you cut one. The beginning of Winter or in frosts in Winter is the time for cleaning the bodies of trees. The frost checks their putting out Buds and hardens the wounded places, whereas at this time of year the sap bursts out all round the wound. Nothing but necessity excuses sneding at this time of year where we dont wish any thing to grow. As I am writing it thunders with snow and hail. I hope it will change the Weather. A change must be for the better. Worse we can't have.

5 May 1740.

This day calm but the Wind at N. Sunshine but I am told cold out of the Sun. 6<sup>th</sup> May 1740.

## XX

3 Feby. 1741.

CHARLES,—I had yours of 23<sup>d</sup>. . . . If you would read my Letters over it would save me much of writing, as from your not reading of them I am obliged to write the same things over and over and frequently the last time of writing the same thing comes too late, as I fear what I am now to write will do. Besides I frequently ask Questions in order to take measures according as I find things, and if you do not answer me, I can't give distinct orders and in time. For example I wrote a good time ago to know how many thorns you had left for planting out this year more than would serve for the Hedges about the House. Your answer was that as soon as you had near supplied all wanted about the House you would let me know. Now you write that you have done about the house, and without telling me what number you have over or knowing how I designed to dispose of them had I known what number you had. You tell at once you have to make good the fences

at the Town as far as . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . I have . . . . . in writing this to  
 show you how your not reading my Letters disconcerts me,  
 and to show you how reasonable my request is when I repeat  
 my desire that you 'l read my Letters. Had you given me an  
 answer as to the number of Thorns and finished all about the  
 House, even the Sneding up the Haining before going any  
 where else, I should have given you directions about the Thorns  
 and the fences at the Town. But I must now follow your  
 scheme and give in<sup>1</sup> my own, and you have told me your's so  
 lamely that I can't well know what to say to it. I neither  
 know how many thorns you have for the fences at the Town  
 nor what you 'l fall short, nor where you 'l begin or what you'l  
 leave undone if you have not enough. These and severals  
 other particulars you certainly would have given me, had you  
 thought my opinion of any use even as to the supplying the  
 hedges about the Town. But by not writing more particularly  
 and not telling me something of the Condition of the  
 ditches. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .

Upon receipt of this take up all the thorns<sup>2</sup> etc. West from  
 the S. West corner of the Minister's Inclosure below Mr.  
 Gordon's house and West of his ground towards Wilson's  
 house and supply with them as far as they will go any of the  
 ditches round my own Enclosures south of that road that  
 stand good. Dont put in thorns into places where the Dikes  
 or Ditches want to be cast up and mended for that is smother-  
 ing and losing of so many plants by covering of them with  
 earth when mended and made fencible. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .

Have any and who of the Tenants called for any trees. I

<sup>1</sup> Give up my own.

<sup>2</sup> These would be removed to make way for new houses.



have wrote and particularly of this some time ago. Let me have a List of each kind and the numbers planted in the Wood. Let me know what number of thorns you guess you have for planting out next year and what number you have that may be for planting out the year after. Mr. Lowther sent me word he was to put the Trees and Garden Seeds on board as<sup>1</sup> Saturday, and I hourly expect his Bill and Bill of Loading. Put the Trees in Nursery, and such of the Seeds into the ground presently that should be early in the earth. Consider if you have omitted any in the List you sent up and write soon that if possible you may still have them against the later crop. You may thin Chesnuts and Walnuts in Nursery and plant them in Nursery in the Wood . . . .

. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . Dont fall short in Onions and Leeks this year as you have commonly done. You had plenty of dung last winter and this and now you have some ashes for heavy ground or for Mixtures where proper for any plants. Get me plenty and good things for the Kitchen. You can now guess of what kinds the greatest demands are. Take care of the Fruit Trees that what fruit we have may be good, well flavoured and tasted. Remember to plant 3 or 4 Rows of Artichokes; dont spare dung upon them in large trenches at first planting. You'l begin to think of Cucumber beds and horse dung of straw litter if to be had. I hope you had good earth for them that we may have plenty and good. Green sage I hope you have got and all sweet herbs commonly used. Don't omit any thing can help you to a good crop of Garden things that can be got by Labour and care; saving in either is no real thrift, even tho' you should work the ground twice over to open it, if it requires it, or if you think it may do service to such crops as may agree with the ground being well opened as Turnips Carrots etc., several others do. Lose no time in thinking of such things.

. . . . .  
 . . . . .  
 . . . . . Dont glance this Letter and

<sup>1</sup> A slip for 'on.'

then throw it by, as if saying you have read it was enough. Read and consider it over and over for I can't have time to repeat the same things every Post.

3<sup>d</sup> Feby 1741.

They are now beginning to sow in the Country about you, so pigeons will build. How do the Houses seem to be stocked? Let White, Sandy and what have very much white fly and none else. Mark them and keep an account of what do fly.

## XXI

CHARLES,—We have ten days of wet weather, sometimes rain <sup>24 Feby. 1741.</sup> and at others snow or hail with cold N.E. Winds. This day cold frost but clear and fair. I wish it may continue that work may go on again for these last ten days have been good for nothing but soaking the roots of new planted trees and a little warmth will make them put out roots to take a little hold of the ground. I expected to have heard yesterday of your having received the Trees and Seeds and in what condition they were that I might the sooner supplied<sup>1</sup> you if any were wrong, short or spoiled of all you wrote for. I shall expect plenty and every thing good from the Garden as I have recommended that last year and this and you have had fresh earth and plenty of dung these two years, and I hope you have not spared labour in opening and refreshing the earth both for the fruit trees and under crops. I know we save labour in opening and working of our Ground both in Gardens and Fields. The folly of such thrift generally appears in our Crops and in the foulness of our Ground. The first might be mended and the other cured, by which we should be well paid for a little labour. This would be found could we be prevailed upon to try it right and to purpose. But one small ingredient being left out in a Receipt disappoints the success to be

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<sup>1</sup> Sooner (have) supplied.

expected from the whole. I reckon this weather has checked the Wheat Tares and Grass and that none of them look so fresh as upon Saturday senight. A little warm weather will recover all and will bring up the pease and Oats<sup>1</sup> lately sown. The clay land will require some dry days to make it fit for labour and Cropping. A little march dust will come seasonably, and I wish none may neglect it if it come, for fear of wet again. A late Seed time makes a late harvest, which seldom proves a good one. Besides it leaves no time for many things for our service between that and Winter, which we should do.

I long to hear of the Haining being finished and the Nurseries put into order. As the numbers of plants in it now lessen every year I expect what remain have room and all of it is in good order. English Elms are now the chief I would have propagated, so lay all you can and take care of what are taken off. I wrote before not to take off what are not well rooted.

Pray do my Wife's fowls prosper and thrive. How do the Hogs<sup>2</sup> look?

24 Feby. 1741.

## XXII

3 March 1741<sup>3</sup>.

CHARLES,—The chief reason for my writing is to send the enclosed List of Seeds which went this morning with Sir Ch: Gilmour.

You wrote that Lowther had sent you little Leek Seed, so I wrote by penny post to desire him, if possible to get and send me a little more, and having no answer (you know we use many Leeks in Soups when you have plenty) I called at Switeser's Shop<sup>3</sup> in Westminster Hall, having got a List of

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<sup>1</sup> Winter wheat was sown then in October, and now, end of February, in braird. Pease and oats, sown here early in February, were the staple crops of the tenants, who had scarce any wheat and rarely saw wheaten bread. See p. 18. Cockburn writes to Wright (1725), 'I am of your opinion that you may come to make wheat and rye bread as cheap as peas.'

<sup>2</sup> Young sheep fattening.

<sup>3</sup> Schweizer, a German. Westminster Hall and St. Paul's were open resorts for business. At one time it was the same outside the bar in Parliament House, Edinburgh. Here Lord Cockburn bought his first skates.

Seeds from him as I passed some days before, and in order to get Leek Seed I took a few of other kinds which Sir Ch: has taken with him, and will send to my Wife's Lodgings in Edin: as soon as he gets down, which I hope may be about Saturday senight. Give all a fair trial and so get ground ready that we may see whose seeds answer best, where we have of both the two Seedsmen the same kinds. By this day fortnight you may have some of what I now send in the ground. Better too much than for us to want at any time of year. In my last to J. Dods I wrote some directions for you about putting your Garden ground in high order when to be cropped. The being at pains before hand gives the best chance for success if a season answers. Switser has promised me Welsh Onion Seed but as Sir Ch: was going he took the things mentioned in the note and the onion will come time enough. We have very dry weather with easterly winds. It keeps back the Spring but fine for ploughing and working of ground. I hope good use is making of it by you and the farmers. Be careful in dunging strongly to the Artichokes and Water the dung before you put the earth upon it if not done. If you put a small mixture of well Skreened ashes into the earth put into the trench above the dung it will help to keep the strong soil open. Pick out strong plants for your new plantation and when the weather is not cold they must be strongly watered, as indeed should be what were planted before, in order to strengthen the roots now in the spring. They like strong soil but open and moisture for making them swell. A mixture of strong soil with a mixture of rotten dung Loom and Ashes is the best composition for them, for strength, openness and being frequently moistened is their delight. As dry in Winter as possible. I hope the dung is spread to be ready for first wet to wash it down. The first soft rain will bring up Seeds finely, that have been sown in dry mould. My Son tells me he hears one of the Mares is w<sup>t</sup> foal. Which is it and how near foaling do they think her? Is the Mare recovered was strained or how do they think she trots?

3<sup>rd</sup> March 174<sup>o</sup><sub>1</sub>.



## XXIII

31 March 1741.

CHARLES,—Enclosed I send you a second small parcel of Seeds which I am sure came from Turkey. If you dont get horse dung from Straw, your beds will not keep a right heat, and your Crop will be according to the goodness or badness of the beds. Every thing must suffer from this very cold weather and these cutting Winds. A vast deal of snow appears to be in the clouds which must come down before we can have any warmth. We have every day showers of Snow or Hail but not enough to empty the clouds. The ground also must be very dry as we have had no wet since I came thither that can have gone any way into it. In all probability the Springs will be very low the end of this summer, and if we have not rain soon to go to the roots of the large trees planted this year, many of them will suffer as will even many of them planted last year, as many of their roots must be weak from the badness of that season and would for that reason have required moisture and warmth to have saved them this. A good hearty shower to go to the roots of every thing is much wanted and westerly wind after it to bring every thing away. The clouds seem so heavy that I am in some hopes of a fall. Should that come they who have their Barley in the ground will see it come finely away as will every thing else. But no tender thing can stand these frosts and severe winds.

The cold certainly hinders the pidgeons from breeding tho they must have meat enough. Have you any number of the young White? Let all fly that are White or are mostly so and also the Sandy, but none else. Mark what you let fly and number them.

I fear the Elms lately taken off the Mothers may have suffered by their roots having dried. I hope you have sned up the Walnuts and thinned their tops, or that you'l do it presently. Look narrowly over all the fences up the way, and wherever you suspect danger of Cattle getting out or in, make all sure as far as possible. See to the men's doing their work completely down the way and that they keep to it and really work, and without ceremony let whoever does not be directly discharged.

I hope you have made good use of Matts for saving your young Crops either by covering of them with hoops or setting of them up to screen them from the very cold Winds. When mild, water your Artichokes strongly. It will strengthen the roots and make the fruit swell. Water whenever mild weather, will also bring forward your Crops for the Kitchen, make roots etc. swell.

So far I wrote last Post when I was interrupted.

It does not blow so hard to-day neither has any snow fallen, but the wind is still N.E. and it looks heavy.

Last night my Son had a Letter from my Wife telling that the Lock Mare is dead, and she tells of her being opened. I am so sure by the account she gives from the Farrier that she has been heated and let catch cold, as if I had seen her so used. All excuses or pretences for other causes are vain, for that and that only has been what has inflamed her inwardly till it produced a Mortification. She was a hardy thriving Mare and not to be spoiled by work had she got fair play and in the least taken tolerable care of. It is gross to kill me a Mare the like of which is not to be got for handsomeness and goodness every way. I never drove horse or Mare came up to her. Tell the Coachman<sup>1</sup> such a Mare well deserved better usage, and bad usage has killed her as much as if he had shot her.

31 March 1741.

Tell J. Dods I have nothing to say but what is above.

#### XXIV

CHARLES,—I have only one from you since I left you. It <sup>24 April 1742.</sup> was of 9th. If you let the Saughs<sup>2</sup> be cut and dry we may be disappointed of their growing. You say nothing of the dung hill being made down at the Town. I never trusted to your fir Seeds from the North as you did and your corre-

<sup>1</sup> The laird had his carriage like any modern country gentleman.

<sup>2</sup> Willows, Lat. *salix*. Very common in place-names. Even a considerably thick portion of a willow will continue to put out shoots after being cut from the tree, if kept fairly moist.

spondent has served you the same way about the plants. Being punctual is reckoned a great Sin in our Country. Let me know when the Red Meadow becomes dry enough for men being set to the making of the large ditch<sup>1</sup> for inclosing what is to be planted there. Make enquiries in time if firs and Oaks are to be heard of for that use and that are to be depended upon for next Spring, that I may not be disappointed. The Cattle rubbed down the Dykes at each side of all the Gates down at the Town. Go round and see to their all being well made up both in Red Meadow and other Inclosures. Dont delay this nor let it be done by halves. How do this last year's plantations of all kinds and every where hold? I hope you have put the Nurseries in good order and cut over what required being so every where, not forgetting that in Easter Wood up the way. This is the season for cutting over, don't let it pass which it will soon do. You tell me Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokb: is at work in Easter Wood. Do you go there and take one of your men with you, cut over all the planted trees in the first Hag that want being cut over and make your man clean all round that air may get in to the cut over plants and to prevent its being choaked with the grass in Summer. Let me know how the planted trees in that Hag look upon your having this opportunity of examining narrowly. Don't delay this, for just now is the Season for cutting over and if you don't trifle with it you'l soon go over it and do it much good. I can't have time to write often to you, but do you write once every week at least to me, and let me know how all goes in Garden, Wood, plantations Inclosures etc. and particularly how Grass is in each Inclosure for giving mouthfuls to my Cattle that are for fatting or for my Mares. Less than Mouthfuls will never fatten Cattle or make Cows or Mares give Milk. Taken in Horses<sup>2</sup> don't expect this. We have had some warm days tho' the Wind has been from the E: but this day it has blown very fresh N.E.

24<sup>th</sup> April 1742.

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<sup>1</sup> This shows that ditching was not the same as draining, which was making an open cut to carry off surface water that might form ponds.

<sup>2</sup> This is a curious reading of one's obligations to grazing customers.



## XXV

CHARLES,—I am glad you got the firs and that they are well <sup>8 May 1742.</sup> rooted. If they thrive I'll bespeak more of them against Michaelmas. Did you ever enquire about the Oaks at Beanston.<sup>1</sup> I wish you can get a sample of them and write to me their size and how rooted. The Wind came to S. West Yesterday and we have had some fine showers which came seasonably after long, cold, dry East Winds. If Showers with you it will save the grass and do great service to the corn as also to all trees planted this year and particularly to the lately planted firs. I hope the dung hill is made before this and the Gates etc. of all the Inclosures down the way made good. As soon as this gets to your hands be sure to get as many Ditchers as you can and set them to the enclosing of the Spot of Red Meadow where the firs are planted. I would have the ditch or Drain that goes round it made 7 feet broad and deep, but as the making of it complete at once will take too much time and make it not safe to put in Cattle into the rest of the Meadow tho' the grass should be good, Wherefore I would have you with all the haste you can with a number of hands with J. Dods or you looking frequently at their really working and making good Work in making the Ditch enough to keep out Cattle—and this being done you may go over it again and finish it the whole breadth depth. I would have the Bank of fale<sup>2</sup> of inside,<sup>3</sup> full two feet in height, not above 2½ feet throw of the earth at back of the fale a little higher and sloping as I did upon the other new Ditches in order to plant two Rows of Hedge in Oct<sup>r</sup>. You'l get a great deal of fale and Stuff more than to do such a dyke of inside as above<sup>4</sup> that must be thrown in to fill up old Ditches or holes but put good earth or at least the best of it for the thorns to grow upon. Pray dispatch that I may get Catle into t he field without. You'l

<sup>1</sup> Between Haddington and East Linton, where summer fallowing was first introduced into the county.

<sup>2</sup> Fale is turf, and much used long ago as a building material and for a fence, but in neither capacity was it held in great respect. 'Like draws to like, as an auld horse to a fale-dyke' is an old saying.

<sup>3</sup> 'Of inside' is 'on the inside.'

<sup>4</sup> 'As above that' = as what there is beyond that.



change the Gate as I told you. I hope you planted the fire<sup>1</sup> thick as many may chance to die. Did it take all the firs? Pray Water the New planted fruit trees in dry Weather as also the new planted Artichokes. You're in the right to sell what you have in the Garden above what my Wife wants. Let the Ashes that were cut in the Haining be cut for proper Country uses such as I may want for farming business and carried up to the Girnel.<sup>2</sup> I did not promise Ch: Cokburns Davidson's land. I cannot do it as Davidson had a Lease. I must settle this when I come down, but in mean time I expect Kinghorn to pay up his rents, and what is due for Davidson's feu at this term. I have nothing to do with what is between Yule and him.

8<sup>th</sup> May 1742.

[The following Mem. is written on the back of the above Letter by Mr. Yule.]

The Oak Ash and Birch in this Wood with the exception of several reserved Oaks was sold and Cut in 1796.

(Signed) J. Y.

## XXVI

30 Sept. 1742.

CHARLES,—I have wrote several times to J. Dods to tell you what occurred to me at the time, and upon Saturday last I wrote a long letter to yourself. I hope you dont delay or neglect forwarding such things as the season allows of being done now. This ought to be the chief time of all the year for field plantations, Ditching, gathering Seeds, Sneding and many other necessary things which may all be gone about now better than at any other season. If you trifle away this Season and this weather you cannot do things so well when the weather changes and at double expense. Don't lose a day

<sup>1</sup> 'Fire' is a slip for firs. 'Field without,' *i.e.* outside the fence enclosing the firs.

<sup>2</sup> The girnel or granary on a barony to store the kain or corn rents of the tenants. There are, in the Letters, few traces of the old feudal tenure. Note that 'Cokburns' is written for Cokburn under the influence of 'Davidson's' following.

nor an hour of a day. Attend you the Men close and make them work or discharge them. It is picking my pocket to make me pay Men that can't or won't work. But being well overlooked and checking of them severely when they have been idle or have wrought wrong in your absence are necessary things in seeing me get justice, and I expect them of you. I have very little time to write so dont expect my repeating, but give attention to what I have or shall say. I have desired you to get some Seeds, and I have ordered severals to be gathered here for nurseries so prepare and sweeten ground for them. I hope you have laid plenty of small leafed Elms<sup>1</sup> and have taken what were well rooted off the Mothers. How does the Nursery thrive in the Hay Yard? Read over my last and omit nothing I directed in it or any to J. Dods. When you come to plant where the Firs were above pan Meadow don't grudge any trouble in even enlarging large holes and digging well under the surface as far as you can with a spade. An hour spent extraordinary in right planting and in taking up with strong roots, saves many hours in supplying besides the disppppointment of a year's growth of the trees. I told you where I would have Elms, and where I would have chiefly Oaks with one Ash to two Oaks and one Beech to four Ashes. You may put one Oak among the Elms to ten of the Elms and about 6 Beeches dropp'd among the Elms. When the throng of your plantations are over or when hard frost, sneed up the old trees north of this new plantation upon the head of the old Dyke, and also the old plane tree and old Elm that their branches may not drop upon what are to be planted. So leave them as little Tops as you can. You know how small tops they leave to hedge row Trees about this Town. Lay fine earth with your hand to each fibre and tread all closs to the roots with great care thrusting it well and closs in as far as you have cov'd<sup>2</sup> it under the surface all round. If you follow the above directions this

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<sup>1</sup> The English elm, preferred by Cockburn to the indigenous Scottish broad-leaved or wych elm.

<sup>2</sup> The hole for the tree was to be at bottom widened for the roots by being arched out or coved. A 'coved ceiling' is known in architecture. He explains himself a little before this, where he says, 'diging well under the surface as far as you can with a spade.'

will in a few years be a fine plantation. If you won't be at pains about it, we shall be at the trouble and expense of supplying every year and it not near so good at last as right doing now will make it. Let the planting of this alone till you have supplied all former planted trees and hedges and till all the hedges are planted upon the ditches made in the Spring. Make the fence to the north soon and strong as Cattle will be in pan Meadow and Middle Enclosure. By the time this gets to you I depend upon your being well advanced in supplying large trees and hedges. Write frequently how you go on and read my Letters that you don't omit doing as I order. I hope the Foresters have not been nor are not Idle. Why don't you tell me where they are employed and from time to time how they advance. This has been fine Weather for their sneding. I hope good use has been made of it. The Wind is now come to the West and is mild and the glass falls so you may get Water in the Ponds and a little spring upon the grass, both which will be acceptable. Don't forget supplying the Large Elms and also the Chesnuts and Oaks in the Old Church Yard. Be at pains about them and let the holes for them which I beg you'll make very large be open for some time before you plant them. Let me know what number of Trees you supply in every place and also what number of Thorns white or black and Brambles you plant. So far I wrote to have gone by last night's post when I was interrupted, so I begin on Wednesday morning early. It rains a thick and heavy rain and the Wind got again to North East. If any thing occurs between and tomorrow night I shall add to this before sealing of it. This is the third morning since I began this. So as I can write seldom, I desire you'll mind what I do write, as I can't be repeating over and over what if you'll look over my letters you'll know my orders about. We have had fully 24 hours constant rain and this morning it is fair with the Wind at N. East. Tell J. Dods I had his of 22<sup>d</sup> but he does not tell me if he had harrowed or made fine the Wheat Inclosure in order to encourage Weeds springing. I fear I shan't have time to write to him this day. If you have planted any thing this rain will have got to the roots, and if he has harrowed the field West of the Town many Weeds will spring yet, and be



destroyed by next plowing. I again recommend your making good use of your time in forwarding your business.

30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1742.

## XXVII

You write very seldom so I know little what is doing, consequently can give no directions. I am put to think the reason for this and can find none but one of two. One that little is done and you dont care to tell me so. The other that as I write seldom you think you need neither be in haste in going on nor in writing but drone on trifling away the season properest of all the year for business. 17 Oct. 1742.

The last from you was of 24<sup>th</sup> last month. I need only name the date to show you how little my repeated directions are obeyed, and what can I think of any other orders when what I have repeated a hundred times is not minded. I can give no orders, as I know not one bit what you have done or what you are doing except a little very short and so not to be understood Story in your's of 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. The Season is most favorable, but work in Nov<sup>r</sup> costs . . . double what it does at this season and cannot be half so well performed.

I can give my consent to no houses being built in the Main Street of the Town but what are two Storys high. None who think justly and wishes well to it can wish to have it disfigured in that particular or any other that can be prevented. Every man concerned in the place has an interest in having the Main Street appear as handsome and to look as well as we can and not to have little paltry houses in that street. This is for the good of every one has Property in the place, and the letting it be confusedly built hurts all—whereas good handsome houses sets off the place—whereas ugly ones hurts the narrow thinking man that builds them and also disfigures the Town and loses to all concerned ten times more than the fool saves. I suppose you design little poor Windows and Doors that nobody can go in or out without breaking their head except the<sup>1</sup> remember to duck like a goose.

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<sup>1</sup> For 'they.' Cottages were very low because the timber (cabers, here called spars) needed to support a roof on the clay or turf walls was small and scarce. The low door was supposed to add warmth. The windows were small for the same reason. Glass was a luxury. Stone was little used for building.



It is a common wise practice which proceeds from their wise heads and noble way of thinking in Scotland, that if any thing is made look ugly, or if neat is spoiled in dressing, it is thrift.<sup>1</sup> Losing a hog for a halfpenny worth of Tar is with them a mark of judgment. How many instances do you see daily (if you look about you) of pounds being lost by saving as many shillings which if laid out to purpose in doing what they were about completely, would have made it by so many pounds better. I don't thoroughly understand what it is that you tell me Mr. Yool desires. If drawn upon paper I shall judge better and if I see no material objection I'll be ready to serve him. Tell him that I wrote to Mr. Tod upon receipt of his and I had an answer telling me he would serve Mr. Yoole the best he can as I had wrote so strongly to him. The Quarry is very deep in Tirling<sup>2</sup> you know, and so will prove expensive, but if you, he and others will join, I won't refuse to let you have Stones for the Working, provided you work it fairly without spoiling of it. I am sorry to lose more of the trees, so I only do this to encourage Building in the Town. Every good House built in it adds to the Value of the rest, and if more houses there would be more business of all kinds.

Hereabout they have neither too much nor too little moisture but the earth finely mellowed and in very good order. I hope you planted some few Swedish firs in the Wood cut this year if you had any proper for it. If you found the ground wanted more moisture to enable them to make holes where the old firs were, why did you not supply the Hedge row trees down at the Town for which the season answers finely. Pray think. Why did you not send to Kelso<sup>3</sup> a second time for an answer? Was the trouble great? Sure you are asleep. I

<sup>1</sup> Thrift on the part of the heritors, and not the Puritanism of the Presbyterian Church, accounts for the ugly, mean parish churches. Pennant said, because the Master was born in a stable, they thought it fit to worship Him in one.

<sup>2</sup> Removing the surface soil so as to expose the rock, still used as a technical expression. There are traces of this quarry nearly opposite the old house and in the bank of the dean.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Walker tells that there was at this time a nursery carried on by one Dickson at Hassendean Burn in Teviotdale, which must be what is referred to here. Near his death Dickson went over his books and found he had sold enough trees to plant 38,000 Scottish acres. The 'Swedish firs' above were spruces.

only repeated what I bid you tell when at Ormiston—tell the Carrier, and now only you promise to speak to him. I can't bear such trifling. Let the Gravel Pit stand open. Take care to strengthen the roots of the Silver firs in Nursery. Try again the Seed of the Swedish fir if you can find any. If you got no answer from Kelso why did you not try some other place to prevent being disappointed entirely or lose this fine season. But excuses for putting off is the highest pleasure of our Indolent Country. You never tell me what Alex<sup>r</sup> Cok: is doing in the Wood.

17 Oct<sup>r</sup>. 1742.

## XXVIII

CHARLES,—I have yours of 29<sup>th</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup>. How does the first 6 Nov. 1742. cut Hag in Easter Wood look now that I reckon Alex<sup>r</sup> has gone through it? Do the planted trees advance equally in height or which kind gets the better? Does it want any and of what kinds to supply any spots or do you think it will prove thick enough? If you think it must be supplied do it with trees a little taller than the rest as they'l stand 2 or 3 years before they begin to take roots strong enough to enable them to make strong shoots, so if you plant too low trees now the former planted ones will overgrow them much.

Is not the Stripe West of the Upper Wood and East of Stone Park too thick? You'l be able to observe that the better that you say Alex<sup>r</sup> has dressed it. If too thick give Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight or other of the Tenants what can be spared of proper sizes for them, or take for your own use such as you think of proper sizes for our own planting any where. Let them know this and if they want more than to be had there give them out of the Haining or where else you can spare them.

Let Alex<sup>r</sup> do completely where ever he goes as we can't be going over all every year nor even every two or three years. I find you have had much less rain than we had before your's. This Week has been pretty dry so I reckon you advance well where the ground is not too dry. I hope you plant tall trees in the East Wood by the Town as they are sheltered from the

Wind. Let me know the numbers and kinds planted in every place. I need not recommend the care of the Fruit trees of all kinds in the Garden. Don't put Crops too near to stifle them in Summer. Let me know if any are gone of which you have not plants of the kind proper for supplying. Will your Mulberries do or must you have new plants? Sned up to small heads all the trees upon the old dikes round where the firs were cut that the drops may not hurt the hedges to be planted nor the Trees within. Don't spare black thorn and Bramble plants where you plant new or supply old Hedges. I hope what White thorns you get and plant will be good and strong plants. Do the buds upon the Walnuts look fresh and promise well as yet?

I hope you have been very careful in taking up trees with good roots putting of them carefully into the holes without doubling the roots and that you have spread them well out and put fine mould closs to the fibers distinctly and have made large holes so as to give room to extend roots and get strength to enable them to force their way a year or two hence into the solid ground. Saving of trouble in these things has made many of the large Beeches etc. die after standing a year or two from not having had room in the pinched holes to get strength in their roots and so have died when they came to the hard ground where another year's growth to their roots which a larger hole would have allowed of, would have enabled them to force their way. Holes should be broad in proportion to the tree and the broader the hole the more the tree will thrive and the harder the ground is naturally the more of it should be loosened by making a broad hole, and for Carrot rooted Trees the deeper the earth should <sup>1</sup> be loosened below at bottom of the hole.

We shall have more good trees by planting the half with the above care in every particular, than by planting double the number and neglecting care in any one thing. This I have long preached and many a time have I repeated it, and many a tree since I began to plant would have been saved had such

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<sup>1</sup> Read, 'the deeper should the earth be loosened,' etc.



care been taken at first. Have you not thinned the Haining and the Wood before Alex<sup>r</sup> Cok:<sup>s</sup> by the large trees planted out where the firs were cut and the Shades<sup>1</sup> were? Will more want to be taken out or do you think the above places well enough thinn'd at least for some years, with what are taken and to be taken this Season? Dry frosty mornings are proper for turning, mixing and chopping of it well and small that it may spread thin and equally. Will there be enough of it for sprinkling over all the Wheat Enclosure over against it? I wish to have it well done and laid up dry. Let me know when done and if it is well rotted and in good order. The farnes<sup>2</sup> should be carried part to the Town and part to the House and Stacked up at both places as last year and as dry as possible. What of them are not dry should be put to a new Dunghill of this year to rot with it and to be mixed next Summer in it. I hope the tall trees designed to be planted this year shall be in the ground by the time this gets to you and that you are in hand with the hedges. I wish the new and supplying of old that<sup>3</sup> go on apace that we may have no more planting till end of Jan<sup>ry</sup> when the days begin to lengthen. How does the Nursery thrive in the Hay Yard? Give me particular answers to each thing above. The nights are now long and you may write each night a part, till you finish full answers to every thing and also what else occurs. Have you got sloes and Briers from Cramond?<sup>4</sup> I have wrote to Lowther for Garden Seeds and shall send them and Nursery Seeds together.

6<sup>th</sup> Novr. 1742.

This was wrote in the forenoon. About 3 o'clock we had Thunder Ligtning and a storm of hail.

<sup>1</sup> See note, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Ferns, generally brackens, a very scarce plant now in East Lothian.

<sup>3</sup> Should be omitted. Evidently due to anticipation of the following 'that.'

<sup>4</sup> Anne, sister of the writer, 'married Sir John Inglis of Cramond, Post-master-General for Scotland.'—Cockburn-Hood's *House of Cockburn*. The family connections here were very complicated. Lady Ormiston, Adam Cockburn's second wife (mar. 1690, d. 1720), had for first husband Sir John Inglis, first baronet of Cramond (d. 1688). Janet Inglis, his third daughter, married Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1709). She is the 'Niece Clerk' of Mrs. Patrick



## XXIX

19 Feby. 1743.

CHARLES,—

I hope you have before this day supplied and made good all the Ditches about the Town with trees, Quicks of each kind etc. not forgetting Rosses Honeysuckle and the like. I wish the Seeds lately sent down may have a quick passage. I fear the onion may be late. If you get ground as I directed it may make up a little—but they would have been better upon ground so managed and sown 1<sup>st</sup> Feby. I would have you try to keep some of the Seed till next Spring to be sowed earlier than this can be and in that case you'll have time to manage the ground and have it in the best order possible in every respect. Keep the Seed carefully neither too dry nor too Moist. I hope your Corrot ground was very well opened to let them meet with . . . and striking their roots strongly. Good Crops in any thing pay for the pains taken in good management. Pray take care of the fruit trees both upon the Wall and Espalliers. It will be a pity to have such assortment of proper kinds for our Climate be spoiled or give disappointment for want of pains or a little care. If any thing has been omitted that can be as yet helped a little let it be done as far as it can now.

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 . . . . .  
 . . . . . Be sure you neither set eggs for my Wife, or give any to the people upon my Estate but of the very finest large top'd and pure white leg'd hens. We have enough of our own now to propagate a good Breed from of the very best without setting any Eggs of the Hamburgh kind so give none of the Hamburgh to any upon my ground for the have large tops,<sup>1</sup> they are smaller fowls and have not

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Cockburn's Letters. Baron Clerk writes in his *Diary*: 'In the month of December (1720) I lost a very good friend, the Lady Ormistine, my Wife's mother.'

<sup>1</sup> Read—'For though they have,' etc.

pure white legs, so if mixed with our own they 'l spoil or <sup>1</sup> Breed as to size and whiteness of Legs and Bills.

How many fine top'd hens have we of our own kind? Has the young Cock that my Wife ordered to be kept a very large top? Robertson and you may Stock yourselves with Chickens of the very best kind this year and keep none but with large tops and pure white legs. If you do so this year, by next my Wife's and your's will be equally good and no fear of mixture. Whoever inclines to have a really good Breed should keep none but the finest Cocks, for one little Cock will spoil a whole Breed tho' they have the best Hens. So recommend to all the keeping of the finest Cock Chickens. Let me know from time to time to whom you give Eggs. Won't the . . . Cokburnes take Eggs and agree to keep the Chickens, and dispose of all their ugly Cocks by next Xmas? Whoever are wise enough to get entirely into the right kind will find their Eggs and Chickens sell better than if even mixed with the small Black or Spotted kinds. One Ugly Cock among them at Alex<sup>r</sup> Cokburne's will spoil the Breed of all that live there. If each of them will keep this year a fine large top'd and white leg'd Cock Chicken and 2 or 3 of the finest hen Chickens; the Eggs from them will stock them entirely next year. Give each of them there 6 Eggs of the right kind if they 'l all agree to keep the White Chickens. As I said above one bad Cock will spoil the whole Breed in such a place. In the Maineses,<sup>2</sup> such as Rob<sup>t</sup> and David Wights, they had better give each of their Cottars a good Cock Chicken than let them keep ugly little spotted or black Cocks which will spoil the Masters own Breed. J. Mackie and Cotterwell may Improve their Breed by getting a Setting each of this year's Eggs, and keeping the Chickens and by degrees put of<sup>3</sup> all the old Cocks and Hens that are not pure white and top'd and keeping no Chickens but white and top'd ones afterwards. Advise all to the above purpose and assist any that are inclined to do right.

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<sup>1</sup> A slip for 'our.'

<sup>2</sup> Mains is the general name for the home farm on a manor—same as *manse* (Lat. *mansio*).

<sup>3</sup> Cockburn would pronounce this as 'off,' *i.e.* away.

You sent me the enclosed without direction or a word to whom it was to be given.

19 Feby. 174 $\frac{2}{3}$ .

As the earliest Chickens grow generally the largest, having more of Summer before them, the sooner they set Eggs the better. If they keep above 6 Hens to one Cock their Breed will degenerate and dwindle away to small fowls. Five hens are enough for a year old Cock. Greed hurts and disappoints many upon several occasions. Whoever sets too many Eggs will have the smallest and poorest Chickens.

Dont feed the Pidgeons after they begin generally to sow in the neighbourhood, which if dry weather I reckon they'l begin to do soon after this gets to you.

Put some Plants of Elder into young hedges upon light ground, with which Elder agrees best. Also sets of Privy Saugh. Let me hear often and particularly how every thing goes on and looks every where.

[The following Memorandum is added to the foregoing Letter but in a different hand.]

Planted in the Red Meadow				Trees planted in the Wood			
1743.				cut 1742			
Oaks	.	.	3000	Oaks	.	.	1300
Acorns	.	.	2000	Firs	.	.	950
Elms	.	.	50	...	.	.	30
English	.	.	60	Engl: Elms	.	.	30
Ashes	.	.	200	Ashes	.	.	460
...	.	.	300	The old Hags below.			
Planes	.	.	50	Oaks and Ashes	.	.	800
Beeches	.	.	50	The Wood at Ormistoun			
				Town			
				Oaks and Ashes	.	.	380
				Planted where the firs was cut			
				Oaks and Ashes	.	.	1400

Elms where the sheeds <sup>1</sup>		Beech Walk	
was . . .	235	Beeches . . .	15
Horse Chesnuts . . .	3	David Wight's Brae } head . . . }	5
Sweet Chesnuts . . .	3		
Rowentrees . . .	6		
In the plant . . .			
Oaks . . .	30		
Elms . . .	20		
Ashes . . .	12		
Sweet Chesnuts . . .	3		
Horse . . .	3		

## XXX

CHARLES,—We have had a Winter of frost and Snow. If 15 March 1748. mild weather comes you'l have a quick spring after it. Forward fruit and other forward things will certainly be cut off by this Winter, tho' you'l suffer less than had it come later.

I fear it will cut the Wheat, and even the grass where any Spring may suffer which will appear by changing the deep green to a dead brown. It will also have been severe upon Chickens Lambs and the like if not taken particular care of. You should tell me if the Lambs are Ewes or Rams.

You tell me you have set one hen for my Wife, and you say she has three fine muf't and top'd hens. Get as soon as you can a setting of 9 Eggs all of muf't and top'd hens only, and set them for her under the first hen that will sit. If you'l keep the Eggs covered carefully in Bran and turn the Eggs carefully every day they'l keep for some time till a Hen sits. Care makes a great deal of difference in things thriving or not. Give Robertson a Setting of good Eggs that he may have a stock of good chickens for keeping and let him particularly keep a good muft and top'd Cock, as I hope you'l do yourself. A Bad Cock will spoil all the Breed.

<sup>1</sup> This is good antique grammar. It refers to an expression in letter for 6th November 1742, 'where . . . the Shades (sheds) were.' Here we have R. L. Stevenson's kindly broad Lothian dialect coming out.



Don't give whole Settings to any others that the more people may have of the best hens and that the Breed may diffuse itself the better over all my ground, if they'll take Eggs and keep the white leg'd well top'd Chickens, and particularly fine large Cocks. Give 4 Eggs to every one at Alex<sup>r</sup> Cok's that each of them may have the beginning of a Stock if they'll be at the pains. I am glad that Wright at House in the Muir has got Eggs. Give 4 good ones to Will<sup>m</sup> Cokburne. They two will in time stock that neighbourhood. Nay if any of the Colliers or the Cottars at Westbyres and Runchiehall will take Eggs and promise to keep the Chickens, let each have 4 that our nearest neighbours may be stocked. If any Village has not all good the bad especially cocks will spoil the Breed of them who have good. Let all white pidgeons fly and none else. Sell all Sandy, Spotted or Blue. Let me know every one takes Eggs and the number of pidgeons you let fly.

Before this gets to you I hope the Wood and Red Meadows are planted. Observe what I wrote to J. Dods about the fences and hedges. Now is the Season for doing as I wrote and putting them all in good order. You never told me if you sounded any about the Acres for planting and what each said. You don't tell me if the drains are finished in pan meadow. If the pidgeon dung is sown how far it went, and if the rest is sow'd with soot? I wish all this may have been done before the Snow as snow carries dung down to the ground more than rain. Read this over when you write that you may be sure to omit no one particular but that you answer each fully and also every other thing that shall occur.

Tell J. Dods that I am against Sowing the Barley and Clover<sup>1</sup> till the Weeds have had some time to spring and that the mould is very fine by ploughing harrowing or clodding if necessary and the Wrack<sup>2</sup> taken out carefully. Better delay sowing till middle of next month or till about monday the

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence that at this date the modern practice was followed. Bishop Gawain Douglas, in his poems, speaks of red clover as a garden flower under its modern dialect name, 'suckey.'

<sup>2</sup> Weeds gathered on the field and piled up in heaps for burning; same word as wreck, 'wreck and ruin.' It refers specially to the most troublesome weed, quitch or couch-grass, commonly known in Scotland as quickens.

18<sup>th</sup> to give it the last furrow for the Seed, than not have it clean and fine. Weeds will . . . it and not only hinder the roots of this crop from extending themselves, but will hurt it when next to be opened again and made corn of. Too great haste in such business may disappoint, but when undertaken if the weather favours, let him lose no time in carrying it on and finishing all that horses and hands can do, to put it right by hand. Thorough opening and cleaning of ground for crops is too much if not entirely neglected by our Gardiners and Farmers for which neglect all suffer strongly in their crops both in quantity and goodness of fruit, plants and grain. They lose more than is all thought of by their neglects in doing things completely, and particularly in the not opening and cleaning of their ground for Crops of all kinds. I have told you often that you did not make the mould fine enough even about roots of trees in planting, but for small Seeds its being fine is absolutely necessary for giving room for their very small fibers to extend themselves with ease and to draw their proper nourishment from the earth, by which they get more strength and vigour. If we would compute our loss from such savings we should find it double to what the necessary trouble pains and expence would cost. Consequently our not being at the expense proceeds from unthinking stupidity. All Weeds bind the ground and their roots entangle with destroy or at least interrupt the roots of great or small plants. Reason would teach us this and many other good Maxims in Agriculture would We employ our heads a little to the use of it and be at pains in executing what a reasoning head would dictate. This has been a clear frosty day.

15 March 174 $\frac{2}{3}$ .

### XXXI

CHARLES,—Now comes the trying season for Trees where the 16 Aug. 1743. roots have not taken strongly; but I hope from the rains since Midsummer most have got strength in their roots and that they have still moisture about the roots to enable them to withstand this sun and dry easterly winds which are trying for trees but good for Harvest and ripening of the corn.

Farmers run many risks from late Harvests and particularly from winds the end of this and beginning of next month for 10 or 15 days before and as long after our Equinox when winds are to be expected where we are situated upon the Globe. I reckon them always lucky who get down their Wheat and Oats by 20<sup>th</sup> of this month for they run a great risk every day after that from Winds besides other accidents common at all seasons. We sometimes escape winds tho' by the nature of things we have as much reason to expect them as we have to expect frost in Dec<sup>r</sup> and Jany. and people should act by what we naturally are to expect. Our having Winds at other times, and none then is no reason against this. We must take . . . at other seasons but we should have an eye to what we are to expect and what only unexpected accidents prevents . . . Sure he has the best chance who acts by reason and provides against what from natural reasons we are to expect. Reason among our people is seldom called upon for their direction tho' it is what God Almighty gives them for distinguishing of them from their Beasts.

I am for early sowing when weather can allow of it. I know late Crops sometimes prove good but I am sure there are ten chances against a late crop for one that is against an early one, and a wise man will always follow the practice that there are fewest against. Seasons sometimes retard a Harvest tho' the Farmer has sown in good time . . . . .

Lame accounts of things occasion lame orders and consequently things not going to my mind. Read to J. Dods all that is above and indeed the whole of this Letter as it will save me Writing the same thing twice over. I shall long to hear of my Corn Harvest being over and the Pidgeon field well ploughed over. The sooner it is the better chance I shall have for getting a good crop of wheat from the grounds being opened a little to the air and the getting the seed the sooner into the ground after that refreshment. I know my neighbours don't approve of opening of the ground so often as I practice. I don't pretend to convince but as I am strongly convinced that the Sun, Wind and Air nourish the



ground, I am for opening of it to receive that nourishment and am only sorry that the season has made<sup>1</sup> the corn sooner off than it might have ten days more time to be opened before sowing again. Let me know when it is thought the plough may go into it after the corn is carried off. Let me have early and particular advice of such things that I may return my thoughts the sooner and before they'll come too late to do any thing I may advise. The business at this time of year should be done with life as not only this crop's being saved but next year's crop in a great measure depends upon dispatch now.

Employ the thorns you have in the hedge you propose east of pan Meadow. Pray do the Oaks from Runchiehall West along the top of the Brae over against the Church<sup>2</sup> put out good shoots get strength and thrive strongly?

I hope your pidgeons are laying and Breeding strongly Kill all the young not white. Let me know the numbers that fly.

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Half answers only give me more trouble to write new Questions which a full answer would have prevented or vex me that I know no more than if you had not wrote at all. I can't have time to write ten times before I can know all the circumstances which a line or two more to your first letter would have made me understand at once.

Tell Mrs. Miles that I had a Letter from a Gentleman who was at the last Club,<sup>3</sup> Bantering me for there being no good Malt drink at Ormiston. I had no excuse to make but to acknowledge the obstinate stupidity of our people—who talk of being good Countrymen but act against any thing can

<sup>1</sup> This sentence is obscure. He seems above to be anxious to have harvest over so that his plan of exposing the newly ploughed earth before winter sowing might have more time to tell. This sense would require us to read, 'has *not* made the corn sooner off that (for than) it,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> This is not the old church near the house, but the new one, much further away from both the mansion and the village.

<sup>3</sup> Refers to a meeting of the Agricultural Club. Mrs. Miles seems to have been Ramsay's successor.



improve it. We complain of Barley being cheap and yet we won't do any thing towards adding to the consumption of it. I suppose she would be glad of more custom and yet she won't keep drink which would bring her customers. Can our Country thrive or She succeed in keeping a Public House when she acts so foolishly against her own Interest and to the shame of the place and indeed to the Country in general. Can any thing be a stronger proof of the Indolent stupidity of the people who live in so fine a Barley Country and won't be at pains to make good drink of it, tho' the doing so would put money in their pockets and be for their own and the Country's good.

. . . . .  
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If I have any time I shall add at night. I am interrupted now.

16 August 1743.

You have now had a trial of what the Garden produces can best be disposed of to advantage and also what goes best off, so you can crop it accordingly. Let me be informed what you propose to sow and Plant. Pray how do the Artichokes answer which were planted towards the West of the Garden.

## XXXII

3 Jany. 1744<sup>3</sup>.

JOHN,<sup>1</sup>—I hope the sneding of the Wood goes well on. Let me know if they will be able to go through all the planted trees this Winter of which they still have two months good in which they may safely sned Oaks and Ashes particularly, as they are late and the sap wont rise for two months after this gets to you so much as to hurt them by being sned. Oaks and Ashes are the chief kinds, and they may be sned last, by which a fortnight if not three Weeks may be gained in the continuance of the sneding Season, if right managed in the following method. If they will now sned all the firs and other

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<sup>1</sup> John Dods. See p. 50.

planted trees of which the sap rises early, and when they are done they may begin with the Oaks and Ashes, and they won't be the worse should the sneding of them continue till middle of March. I therefore recommend the going presently over all the firs and planted trees and then beginning to the Oaks and Ashes, and as much depends upon taking things in a right time and managing in proper time not beginning with what may be done last. In this way a great deal more may be done in a season than by considering of the best method of doing most. Thinking is of more service in carrying on all business than in our Country is commonly considered or practiced. There is much in timeing of things to advance them. I wrote at first to sned up all natural trees strongly that . . . or by the winds were in danger of hurting the tops of thriving or promising planted trees. I hope they look above them as they go along and do this carefully and that Chas<sup>s</sup> Bell does not trust entirely to them in all these things but goes himself frequently and directs their doing right, and when any thing is omitted or is wrong, he makes them go over it again. All who know me may know that I hate half work, and that I maintain that doing business completely, when we are about any work is thrift.

There is a great deal of writing above every word of which might have been saved if Charles would think and mind what he has heard in general upon planting, Sneding and other business or upon the managing of this work in particular, when I ordered it first. I had lately a Letter from Cha<sup>s</sup> in which he tells me of the mens' going on and that it looks well. Can this be called a particular account? No sure. He should have given me his observations. For example. 'Such kinds do better than others; such end advances better, and there the planted trees seem to have got strength in their roots and make good Shoots; Oaks, Ashes etc. are stunted and hide bound not like to overtake the natural Wood and the like, In order to my making some kind of guess in what condition the wood is. If he observes as overly as he writes he had as good stay within doors.

I want to have some of the firs thinn'd out of the Wood at the Town, to give air to the other trees and also where they

over top or hurt the other trees. I can name no number to be taken out nor out of what places. That must be left to the judgment and discretion of them upon the spot. I don't mean by this to destroy all the firs as in some places was done at last sneding of the Haining for I look upon them as both useful and profitable trees if considered justly, and none from Norway equal to the Timber I saw wrought from them which grew upon that spot when the Coal machines were made. What I mean is only to take out some to give air and room for the rest of the firs and other trees to thrive the better. Where too thick take out the worst and leave the best tree. The best time for cutting is in frost or any time after this frost before sap thins. Care must be taken that when they fall they don't hurt more trees than they serve by being thinned. I design the tops for dry-fences so be sure they are not carried away.

If your Tares are gone, buy a Boll of mouse Pease<sup>1</sup> as called for the Pidgeons and feed them and after you have fed them for a Week and made them find meat at home, secure all in the house over night, and go in and kill all the Blue and . . . in both houses, and continue feeding till people begin to sow. The number of Pidgeon Houses in the Country make<sup>2</sup> pidgeons give little profit, so I'll have them for the colour tho' few. Many will destroy more Wheat than ten times their number will pay for. The feeding before the fright from killing the Blue, will make the White come back for Meat, which otherwise may be frightened to the . . . Pits or Belshes.<sup>3</sup> The sooner this is done the better.

When I began this I designed it for yourself, but as I find most of it is for Ch: Bell, you may give it to him to do as directed in it, and also what was in my last about . . . hills

<sup>1</sup> Mouse eaten, and so tainted and unfit for what was then the commonest bread food.

<sup>2</sup> 'Number . . . make.' Due to influence of the nearer plural *houses*. The 'little profit' due to the number of dovecots showed that the game of 'beggar my neighbour' did not pay. This, the only loose joint in Cockburn's economical armour, was a survival from his feudal upbringing. The laird's pigeons, he thought, had every right to live on the laird's tenants. See pp. 65 and 86.

<sup>3</sup> Halfway up the avenue from the entrance nearest the village. It has some fine laurels and hollies. The dovecot could not have been at Belshes, but nearer the old House. See Introduction, p. xx.



and desire he'll let me know how he came to suffer . . . in my house without orders from me, and in short that he'll let me understand the whole of that story, which must have brought a very ugly reflection upon me, as if I had been capable of being concerned in or so much as conniving at an abominable fraud. It has vexed me heartily, such things being what I think worse than Robbing upon the Highway. I dare say no more for fear of getting into a passion.<sup>1</sup>

These frosts must have checked the fruit trees heartily. They'll have killed seeds of Weeds, and Eggs of Vermin,<sup>2</sup> and have mellowed open ground but severe upon any young tender plants now above ground or not out of reach of the frost.

I desire you'll be careful this year in keeping an exact account to whom you give Eggs of my Wife's Hens, and prefer any upon my ground who will be careful of them. Give none to any out of my ground except to Gentlemen who may ask them, without acquainting me. I hope you and Robertson have none but fine Cocks, if you have, you'll spoil my Wife's Breed. Take the best care you can. I beg you'll part with them presently if you have any not every way very fine. My Wife's Cocks will serve all the hens in the yard till young ones rise up some months hence. Let me know what Cocks you and he have Also if my Wife has any Cocks or Hens not of the very finest kind, All white feathers and Legs with large tops or muft and how many both Top'd and Muft and the ages of each. It is now time to be preparing for a true right Breed and to throw off the Rubbish which will spoil all. If none but of the very finest were left among my Wife's your's and Robertson's, neither of Cocks nor Hens, then all the Eggs would be equally good and equally wished for over the Country. But either of you taking a foolish fancy that a bad Cock of a Stunted kind not half so good for eating (the chief use<sup>3</sup> that fowls are for) don't Crow so well

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<sup>1</sup> This letter illustrates the *emphatic* use of capitals ; in this case perhaps due to strong feeling and the peremptory mood.

<sup>2</sup> Insect pests.

<sup>3</sup> The mainstay of the larder in olden times. Burt says that they were so thin that the breast-bone of one might be used to carve its neighbour.



as a good one, or for some other nonsensical reason, keeping a poor ugly Cock and Hens, defeats all the design of carrying down good for mending the Breed of the Country, which never can be improved in any thing from the cross disposition of our people who are obstinate against improvements of all kinds great or small. It is easy to bring all to be good if Robertson and you please to dispose of all not of the very finest kind and to keep none but of the best. I have wrote this of<sup>1</sup> different days and at many different times. The air has been thick and it looked as if full of snow. At last it begins to fall a little just now (Tuesday morning) the first we have seen here this year. It has been much wished for in the Country to cover corn etc. and also to give moisture to the ground and raise the Springs. It has been a very dry Winter as was the end of Summer.

3 Jany. 174 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

To Ch: Bell and John Dods.

### XXXIII

No date.

CHARLES,—Begin with your own Men and Robertson with taking up and planting the English Elms in old Church Yard Match them as near a size as you can. Be very careful to take them up with large roots and in planting them right. We have not to supply any shall go back so they'l require the more care now. Plant next the trees at back of the Haining as marked, and the two Hornbeams upon the face of the Brae over against Runchie hall. The Hornbeams must be the tallest and best bodied you can find in the Wood as they'l be expos'd to the Cattle. If it is such a morning as you think I can come up<sup>2</sup> in, bring two of the Laborers from the Wood

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'My custom of an afternoon.'—*Hamlet*. This idiom is of frequent occurrence in the Letters.

<sup>2</sup> This is apparently a note sent to Bell from Ormistoun. Probably it was written shortly before the departure for the south. Cf. p. 78, 'supplying Elms in the Old Church Yard' (Sept. 1742). 'Runchie Hall' was some distance westwards. Nos. XXXV. and XXXVI. are undated letters written under similar circumstances.

after Breakfast that as much may be done while I am with you as possible. You know there are some Oaks north of the Old Church Yard to be supplied.

## XXXIV

CHARLES,—See the Men do the fence at the Meadow com- No date.  
pletely right so as no place can let cattle out. Leave the East end of it till May as the Water will be too cold for men to work it now. Get all the Grass seed you possibly can and sow it upon the dry spots of it where you upon going over and looking at it shall find it thinnest. Get Harrows to go over it. I hope by this gets to you the Nurseries are pretty near set to rights. Plant the firs in the Wood and transplant in Nursery what you thin of the firs. When this is done go round all the plantations of this year both at the Town the Wood and others and fix the trees.

Let me have a succession of Salading Pease, Beans, Cucumbers etc. If the Moles have been at work again get Alex<sup>r</sup>. Cokb: and his men to help to spread their hills.

If the great Oak shall want to be cut down which stands near the Holly, do it as Mr. Rowe shall direct. Dispatch business. Do what you go about thoroughly right and suffer none to trifle. Write fully to me once a Week at least how every thing advances.

As the Workmen lately employed at the Coal have made a Wrangling about their Accounts and have blamed Mills as if he had done them injustice, go you with him to be witness to the accounts being adjusted every Saturday night; tho' he should not have money to pay all yet the adjusting of them every Saturday will save him from their tongues espically if before a Witness. I don't desire any of them being wronged but let him and you take care I am not imposed upon. Let every one put a mark<sup>1</sup> or sign his Acct. what he receives and what shall be resting. This will prevent disputes. If I have

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<sup>1</sup> The colliers of that time were the most illiterate of the labouring class. They were, till 1799, serfs bound to the soil, but here they seem to have been a source of troubles that are still with the employer.

time I shall write Miles this Post to this purpose. If I have time, if not by next.

Alnwick Sunday Noon.<sup>1</sup>

Tell Miles this and concert measures for doing as above. Tell Miles not to let the work up the way be neglected. Push on the Mine till several rooms<sup>2</sup> are set off from it, that good coals may be got against the sale comes on.

Morpeth Sunday night.

As the work up the way will require the Oversman's being at hand, he may stay there and not go to the new Work unless Mr. Rowe absolutely wants him, for we must not neglect our old Work. Tell this to Mr. Rowe Milles and Thomas.

### XXXV

No date.

CHARLES,—I wrote a long letter about planting which I expect you'll follow. If any real objections occur let me know after considering what I wrote. I am for planting none of any kind after 7<sup>th</sup> feby. except in Nursery in case of transplanting and that only in case of not overtaking all sooner. So tell the Tenants not to delay for I won't throw away my trees in giving any after that, only to be lost. I hope you have dung for some of the Nursery. What do you propose to do with the Hay Yard? How will it do half Cabbages and half Savoy. They'll help Cows in hard weather next Winter. I don't know but digging up the poor potatoes<sup>3</sup> that are in it may be of some help to your swine. They being . . . cant get otherwise to them. Alex<sup>r</sup> Wight promised 2 or 3 Bushels

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<sup>1</sup> Evidently written on the journey south to London. Note the Sunday travelling of a well-brought-up Whig, and the social aspect of Sunday breakfasts, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mining term still for working-places. Note that on the estate there seems to have been periodical sales of timber, bark, and coals.

<sup>3</sup> We have here a hint of the as yet despised position of the potato, which may account for its culture spreading so slowly. Pigs were allowed to grub the crop off the field. In case, for some reason that has gone, they could not get at them so, the potatoes were to be dug up for them.

of Sweet Grains<sup>1</sup> for them every Week which you may contrive to get up by the help of the old Horse. Take care that the Oxen, Cows and Sheep dont want hay for this wet weather will make them slide if they are not fed. The Oxen twice a day, and a little at noon only when dry weather one stone at night one Stone each morning and half a Stone at ij oClock when dry weather and if wet make it a Stone at ij oClock. If the young ones are with them add a Stone more divided into the three feedings. That is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  Stone each fair good day and 4 Stone among them each bad Snowy or very wet day while the Oxen stay. When the Oxen go turn the young ones into the Highlanders<sup>2</sup> and let them be fed equally with them, half a Stone for each every night when good weather and when very wet or snow give them a Stone for every three in the morning, but if the ground is covered with Snow, give them one other Stone for 3 at ij oClock. Talk with J. Dods about the above Quantities, if enough follow them if not thought enough, add more. There is no thrift in letting them down that are to be sold and this wet is dangerous weather, so give them more if not fully enough tho' we should part with them the sooner. By no means let them run any risk of getting worse for a great deal won't bring them up if once they turn the least, as nothing but fresh Grass will do that and it will require a great deal to keep them for that; so better bestow sufficient now to keep them very good till got off, than a little every day till grass comes, and give them the best grass then. In short keep them good till all are off I propose to sell which I reckon may be in three Weeks; after which a little every Evening for the Highlanders I have ordered to be kept will be enough and the like for the two young ones as I don't propose the Highlanders being fat till they are made so by early good grass, so I only want to keep them in good heart by a little hay every night. See that you carry them regularly over the dry of Middle En-

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<sup>1</sup> Wight began malt-making in the village in 1726, but did not brew till 1739. About the same time Cockburn turns his attention to grazing (p. 63).

<sup>2</sup> Beside the rough black cattle. The oxen were fattening, and so got better treatment. The phrase above, 'slide if . . . not fed,' is significant of the time. The starved creatures were frequently bogged (Sc. lairdet) in the wet places in winter from sheer weakness.



closure when you feed them. When the Highlanders are to be sold are gone, turn the rest and the two young into the Pidgeon field and give them 2 Stone of hay every night which is enough as there is still good picking of foggage on it, and I don't want to make them fat upon hay. I reckon the Sheep<sup>1</sup> will have good pickings south of the Garden,<sup>2</sup> and 2 Stone of hay will keep them every day when the weather is tolerable, When the ground is covered with snow they must have more and for fear of their middling with trees when that is the case, they must be carried up to the back Lee, but let them stay there no longer than it is so, till 1<sup>st</sup> March, and then carry them to back Lee altogether, and fain<sup>3</sup> that south of the Garden. Carry their Rack over regularly from south to North East of the Hollies South of the Garden. Before 1<sup>st</sup> of March you'll have only the Ewes and six Weathers to go up to Back Lee for I would have John Dods sell all the rest of the Weathers in the month of Feby by which time I reckon good will give a price.<sup>4</sup>

Carry on your planting while weather favors as now it does on dry ground. Take up trees may be in the way in case of the Quarries being wrought in Spring and Summer. What of them are above supplying of David's side where gone there or upon the March down between and Belshes, may serve in other places where wanted. Have you wrote for Cucumber Seed or any other from Pringle? The Dung from ferns I fear may not be good for Hot-Beds. You'll think of this in time and let me know what contrivance you propose for getting Dung of Straw. Do the pidgeons seem to have suffered much during the Snow. I need not tell you to let all White or that have a large mixture of White and all sandy coloured fly in Spring, Cutting one of their Claws and keeping an account as

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<sup>1</sup> We have been always taught that sheep were then considered tender, folded or brought indoors at night, and kept in very small numbers. Ormistoun had certainly very few, but there they remained in the open and were fed on hay from a rack as now. Goats, however, were common in Scotland, as being better able to protect themselves from the foxes, not hunted till long after this date. Even yet there is no pack of hounds north of Tay.

<sup>2</sup> South of the garden lay the 'Pigeon Field,' often mentioned. It is to be put under wheat, No. XXXI.

<sup>3</sup> See Introduction, p. xxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> Read 'the good ones will fetch a price.'

exact as you can, what do fly. I hope the hole fallen in upon the Road near the House of the Muir is mended and well filled up. Tell J. Dods of this that it may be gone about and not delayed till somebody falls in which I suspect may be the case, for nothing but something strong ever makes our people think of any thing in time.

Meikle has been with me. He says they<sup>1</sup> have made a road on his ditch by the road side. Look at it. The beginning of March will be the time for curing it, as they 'l make a road again tho' made right now.

Don't plant deep in wet places in the Wood ; just turn down and chop the Sward, putting a little good earth upon it and then plant a top of that. Plant neither Oaks nor other trees in it that are too small. You may pick up a good many of proper sizes by looking carefully round Haining and all the Woods without trusting too much to weak in Nursery.

I am told there was a good Market yesterday, but I have not heard from J. Dods.

The Nonpareil Apples you sent in were poor. The Nonpareils Rectifie are fair. I hope you have grafts of them. Think if you want any other Seed and let me know before I go or as soon as I go to meet me against I arrive at London and I shall send you a direction.

Wednesday 2 o'Clock.

### XXXVI

CHARLES,—I hope by this time you are well advanced with the Pits. I know you and your Men have been taken off, but as the weather has favored beyond expectation they who were at the work might do more by much than in any weather we have had these two months. Tho' you don't come down yourself I may know what is doing every day if you 'l write a line every night and give it to Miles<sup>2</sup> who will every day get it

No date.

<sup>1</sup> They, *i.e.* trespassers taking a near cut.

<sup>2</sup> The first mention of Miles and mining is (p. 38) 20th September 1735, where he is cutting through the rock. In No. XXXIV., undated, he is to push on with the setting off of *rooms*. Cockburn spent the summer and autumn of 1736 at Ormistoun. Note that in one and the same letter,

hither from the Coal hill if no opportunity offers to you. Pray be careful in laying the roots putting the earth close to them and doing every other thing right when you plant. This is fine weather for it and should not be lost if other things can possibly allow of sticking to it. Has George Ronaldson sent for any Trees? When he does go you up and teach them for an hour or two how to plant. Be sure you make them observe and follow your directions which you should be particular in giving distinctly otherwise it will be only my losing so many trees and them their time. Don't give more Trees at a time than they can plant in two days for fear of frost or the root being too long out of the ground. If you have been in the pidgeon house let me know what you observed there. If better stock by what we let fly, if Eggs and what dung you guess may be? When in the Wood look over all that is planted and observe every years planting and if much are gone back and how the firs planted in Oct<sup>r</sup> look.<sup>1</sup> How the Swedish pines and p. . . look. When Sir J<sup>n</sup>. St. Cl.<sup>2</sup> . . . sends for Oaks draw the tallest for him.

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No. XXXIV., we have Mills, Miles, Milles. Cockburn most probably pronounced it Mellis, in two syllables. Cf. Willis and Wills, and modern usage in the case of Foulis.

<sup>1</sup> On 3rd January 1744 we read:—'None [firs] from Norway equal to the Timber I saw wrought from them which grew upon that spot when the Coal machines were made'—referring probably to the mining work done in 1735. It is a pity for the history of Scottish industry that we have but hints here. These firs must have been used for the ladders on which the coal was carried up the shallow shaft in baskets by women, as at Tranent, not far off. With reference to a sentence above, it must be observed that, on 9th October 1739, he asks:—'Will G. Ronaldson or any other want trees for ditching this winter?'

<sup>2</sup> Charles St. Clair of Hermiston, advocate, was one of the original members of the Ormistoun Society.

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# REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

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THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY was held on Saturday, November 28, 1903, in Dowell's Rooms, George Street, Edinburgh,—The Right Hon. the EARL OF ROSEBURY presiding.

The following Report was presented by the SECRETARY, and held as read :—

Since our last Annual Meeting the Society has sustained a severe loss in the death of Mr. John Scott of Halkshill, one of the members of the Council. Mr. Scott had not only been a constant support to the Society by his wide knowledge of the sources of Scottish History and his willingness at all times to place his rich collection of rare manuscripts and books at our service, but he was recently engaged in the preparation of a volume of inedited pieces relating to Queen Mary, which was for some time postponed on account of his illness. It is feared that it will be no longer possible to carry through this work as intended.

On the other hand, the volume which Mr. Scott had proposed as a gift to the Society—the *facsimile* of Queen Mary's letter to the Duke of Guise (1562) from the original in his possession—was left by him in a fair way towards completion. Mr. Scott saw the *facsimile* executed and printed off to his satisfaction, and Father Pollen, who, at Mr. Scott's

desire, undertook to supply fresh notes and introduction, has had the good fortune to make some documentary discoveries in connection with it, which will add greatly to its interest and value. This volume is already in type, and will be issued as a gift from Mr. Scott to the members for the year 1902-3.

There have been five deaths in all during the year and three resignations, and when the vacancies have been filled up there will remain fifty-nine candidates for admission. The number of public libraries on our list is now seventy-seven.

A part of the issue of the present year, the *Chartulary of Lindores*, edited by Bishop Dowden, a work of which the Society may well be proud, is already in your hands.

Another volume belonging to this year's issue is a second volume of *Miscellanies*. This volume, of about five hundred pages, is in type, and will be shortly ready. In addition to the pieces already mentioned in previous reports, the *Miscellany* will contain some documents contributed by Dr. C. H. Firth, viz. : Two narratives of Hamilton's expedition into England in 1748—the Relation of Mr. Thomas Reade and the Relation of Sir Philip Musgrave. A metrical Narrative of a Tour from Edinburgh to Glasgow in October 1641 by P. J. This P. J. has not been identified, but he was apparently one of the friends or attendants of Lord Willoughby. The historic value of the poem is but slight, though it contains some details of interest in the description of Linlithgow Palace, but, as Dr. Firth observes, it forms a supplement of the Descriptions of Scotland by English travellers, collected and republished by Professor Hume Brown. Dr. James Colville contributes some quaint and instructive letters by Cockburn of Ormiston to his gardener, 1727-43. The Reverend Robert Paul edits 'Letters and documents relating to Robert Erskine, Physician to Peter the Great, 1720.' Mr. R. S. Rait publishes from a manuscript in possession of one of our members, Mr. W. Moir Bryce, a muster roll of the French garrison occupying Dunbar in the days of Mary of Lorraine (1553), and Mr.

Francis Steuart prints the Will of Charlotte Stuart, Duchess of Albany, 1789.

There are passing through the press three other volumes which will be ready for issue in the course of next year, 1903-4. Sheriff Scott Moncrieff is making good progress with his edition of Mr. Weston's manuscript, the *Proceedings of the Justiciary Court, 1661-73*, and this will make a volume of over five hundred pages.

Mr. William Mackay has the greater part of the Fraser book, better known as *The Wardlaw Manuscript*, in type.

Early in the year also will appear, under the editorship of Mr. Robert Scott, lecturer on Political Economy in the University of St. Andrews, *The Minutes of a Scottish Cloth Manufacturing Company at New Mills, 1681-1690*, from the Laing Manuscripts in the Edinburgh University Library. It is a unique document, inasmuch as it is the only example of the proceedings of a manufacturing company of the seventeenth century that is known. Mr. Scott writes that, 'Owing to the movement for founding manufactures in Scotland just before the Union, the MS. throws much light on the commercial policy of the time by means of grants of certain privileges to trading corporations, and it also shows some of the indirect means by which such concessions were obtained.'

These publications will be followed by the Ochtertyre Household Book, kindly placed at the disposal of the Society by the owner of the manuscript, Sir Patrick Keith Murray. Dr. Colville, who has made it and kindred account-books the subject of special study, will edit it. He remarks that, under the title *The House Books of Accompts*, beginning Jan. 1, 1737, we have an account day by day of the economy of a baronial house just before the profound changes effected by the '45 and the abolition of heritable jurisdiction (1748). The scene is laid partly in Ochtertyre in Strathearn, but mainly in Fowlis-Easter, a few miles to the north-west of Dundee. The



record, which ends in the spring of 1739, gives the household expenses and the dishes served at table, while indirectly it illustrates modes of social intercourse, and the food-supply from the garden, the farm, and the forest.

The Council have also accepted Dr. Wallace-James's offer to edit for the Society the *Register of the Monastery of Inchcolm* from the transcript in the Advocates' Library.

According to rule, Mr. Æneas Mackay, Sir James Balfour Paul, and the late Mr. John Scott would fall to retire from the Council. It is proposed to re-elect Sir James Balfour Paul and to appoint Professor Rankine and Sir Thomas Gibson Carmichael to fill the other vacancies.

The Council have accepted with much pleasure the services of Mr. Francis Steuart as honorary assistant to our Secretary. Mr. Steuart is well acquainted with the work of the Society, and will help us materially to overtake its increasing business.

The accounts of the Honorary Treasurer show that there was a balance, at 28th October 1902, of £386, 13s. 2d.; that the income for the year 1902-1903 was £528, 6s. 4d. The expenditure for the same year was £326, 9s. 2d., leaving a balance in favour of the Society, as at 24th October 1903, of £585, 7s. 4d.

LORD ROSEBURY, in moving the adoption of the Report, said—Well, ladies and gentlemen, my only cause for surprise is that the list of apologies to-day is not interminable, because we meet under climatic conditions which are more suited to the tryst of Macbeth's Witches than to the meeting of the Scottish History Society. My only comfort must be that the room is absolutely full, so that it is just as well the weather was not finer. But we of the Scottish History Society may warm ourselves with the contemplation of our own prosperity, because, under the guidance of our secretary, Mr. Law, to whom we owe everything, we certainly are enabled to present a report to you which is of the most cheerful and encouraging character. We have, in the first place, an overflowing membership, limited, of course, by the regulations of the Society, but

overflowing to this extent that there are such a number of candidates that a calculation makes one gather that the junior candidate will have to wait about fifteen years before he is admitted to the Society;—no, perhaps rather less, twelve years before he is admitted to the Society. Well, that on the principle of *suave mari magno*, the principle of watching the distress of your fellows with great equanimity, should be singularly amusing to the members of this Society, and I ought not to omit one essential feature of our complacency, which is the admirable balance at our bankers on deposit receipt, which gives promise of our being able to afford any rational enterprise, any rational literary enterprise, in which we may wish to engage. Well that is not the only source of complacency which we have to-day. That I think really lies in our publications and the standard to which they adhere. Our standard, as I have frequently said at these meetings, is a high one. I think it has been admirably maintained by the dainty dishes—the dainty historical dishes—which the Society has prepared to set before its members this year. Indeed, one of these is already in our hands. That is the *Chartulary of Lindores*, edited by our valuable fellow, Bishop Dowden. And to one or two of the others I have had the privilege of access in their semi-cooked condition, that is to say, in proof. Now, those, I venture to say, will not yield in interest to any that have been presented to you. One is the valuable letter of Mary Queen of Scots to the Duke of Guise, which belonged to our lamented colleague, Mr. Scott, of Halkshill, and which has been presented by his family to the Society. Now, to expatiate on that document would require more leisure and more learning than I possess. But I am quite certain of this, from my partial examination, that it is one of the most precious documents that we have yet been able to present to our members. Then we are going to give you a *Miscellany*. The *Miscellany* is so full of excellent stuff that it is extremely invidious to make any selection from its contents. There is a poetical Journey through Scotland, or, at any rate, from Edinburgh to the West, in the year 1641, which, though rather Rabelaisian in detail, is of singular interest to any one interested in the condition of Scotland at that time. It has a melancholy interest to an inhabitant of Linlithgowshire like myself, because it shows that the desolation of the Palace of Linlithgow is not so entirely attributable to the soldiers of the Duke of Cumberland as is generally supposed, but that in the

year 1641 it already was in rather a decrepit condition. There was a roof missing:—

‘ And thus agreed we went to see the hall,  
Which had no tiles to cover it at all.’

That shows that the Stuarts—perhaps the Stuarts can hardly be blamed at that time of crisis—were not so careful of that interesting Palace as they ought to have been, even at the time when they held their dominion in this country. Of course, that makes me shed a silent tear over the project which I have so constantly tried to hold forward of the restoration of Linlithgow Palace on the occasion of every national commemoration, which seems as remote as ever at the time at which we are speaking. Then there is also in this volume another chapter which is to me of singular interest. I mean the Will of the ill-fated daughter of Charles Edward, the Duchess of Albany. I say ill-fated from the shortness of her life and its somewhat gloomy character. But this will, and the documents relating to the will, have never yet been published, and I think they make a valuable addition to the Stuart literature which is so greatly in request at this time. There are at least six or seven other items of conspicuous interest in the book. There is one which appeals to me perhaps more than any other, and it is the collection of homely letters of Cockburn of Ormistoun to his gardener. I think they are so interesting that they ought to be kept out of the *Miscellany*. Not that I mean by that to disparage the character of the other contents, but I think in this age of gardening literature, when the rage for that species of reading has increased so as to produce many trashy and worthless works—at least works which seem to the uninitiated as somewhat shallow—it might be well to publish what is an authentic series of documents of a Scottish gentleman and his gardener in the beginning of the first half of the eighteenth century. Besides, to those who don't appreciate gardening literature, because they are not sufficiently gardeners, there is a charm about this little book which it is extremely difficult to over-estimate. If I might classify it, I should put it among that rare collection of books which people can enjoy by their bedside. I don't mean by that, that books of that description should be opiates. That is not my view, though, indeed, we should be very glad to have literary opiates by our bedside. But what I mean is that the book does not sufficiently excite the attention to keep you awake, which is pleasant and healthy to



read, which you can break off with at any moment when you feel the drowsy god overcoming you, and which leaves a pleasant impression on you when you throw it down by your bedside. Now, I think my friend Cockburn's letters to his gardener answer to this description, and I am not disparaging them when I say that the gardener himself appears to be not wholly worthy of them. I think that we in our generation may appreciate them more than the gardener did. 'Charles,' says Mr. Cockburn, on the 3rd of February 1741, 'I had yours of the 23rd. If you would read my letters over it would save me much of writing, as from your not reading of them I am obliged to write the same things over and over, and frequently the last time of writing the same thing comes too late, as I fear what I am now to write will do.' Then he goes on:—'I have in writing this to show you how your not reading my letters disconcerts me, and to show you how reasonable my request is when I repeat my desire that you'll read my letters.' Well, if the gardener to whom they were addressed did not read them, the somnolent reader may be excused if he occasionally skips as the hour of slumber draws near. They furnish besides to those who are not horticulturists a certain amount of intelligent interest as to their fascinating pursuit. I read under some apprehension from an imprint to a class of social reformers this letter which was written in 1743:—'Tell Mrs. Miles that I had a letter from a gentleman who was at the last club (a Farmers' Club) bantering me for there being no good malt drink at Ormistoun. I had no excuse to make, but to acknowledge the obstinate stupidity of our people—who talk of being good countrymen but act against anything which can improve it. We complain of barley being cheap, and yet we won't do anything towards adding to the consumption of it. I suppose she would be glad of more custom, and yet she won't keep drink which would bring her customers.' That seems to me to refer to almost a prehistoric period. My friend does not confine himself to this. There is a passage somewhat similar, but which reflects on our national character in a way which ought, I think, to add to our national complacency, because the faults Mr. Cockburn finds in the passage I am about to read are no longer charged against the Scottish people. 'This seems a demonstration to me, but I will maintain no argument to which a good answer can be given, though till I get one I shall ascribe our not succeeding in many things, as I think we may, to our inactivity and slow thinking and acting,



in both of which our people proceed as half-asleep, without any lively spirit in contriving or executing, and I really believe much of this proceeds from our low diet, both in eating and drinking. Our common food gives little strength to either body or mind, and our malt drink is the most stupefying stuff ever was contrived.' The editor, Dr. Colville, contributes a very interesting preface to this little volume, but I venture to take exception to one small passage of it, in which he says the letters leave no doubt of the fact that Cockburn read and spoke English, and that farmers like Wight, and even Bell, the gardener, and Dods, the ploughman, understood it, and yet we are told that the speech of Scotsmen, like Cockburn, who sat in the English Parliament after the Union—how did 'English' creep in here? I am afraid we shall have a remonstrance; it certainly was a British Parliament—was the source of wonder and amusement to the southern members. But after the examples set before us this must be placed alongside some romances of history written for modern consumption. Well, I think we may consider the two things much more compatible than Dr. Colville thinks, because although Cockburn might write the purest of English, his pronunciation in those days might be somewhat unintelligible to an English Parliament, and I think we ourselves can remember men who wrote the purest of English whose accent was the purest Doric which could be conceived, and I myself greatly regret that that accent was ever allowed to die out. Now, I will not detain you any longer, because though this room furnishes an agreeable asylum from the climate outside, yet we have other business which I think more important than making or listening to a speech. But I want to urge—and I think I may urge it from the deep interest you know I take in this Society—I want to urge that in all our projects we should keep in view, and strongly in view, the human aspect of Scottish historical literature. My late friend Sir William Fraser contributed an immense mass of very valuable family literature in the shape of those histories which we all know. I always thought the defect of these histories—and I did not conceal it from himself—was that they did not give sufficient place to the human element. There were too many charters, valuable, no doubt, to the scientific historian, but not popular reading, and not appealing to the special mission of a Society like this. What, I think, we who had so much to do with the foundation of this Society had mainly in view was to preserve for posterity the

records of the social and family and human life—if I may so express myself—of Scotsmen who lived here before ourselves. I think that charters, historical documents couched very often in Mediæval Latin, should be left rather to societies formed for the purpose of preserving such documents, and that we should, as far as possible, confine our energies to those family papers, diaries, account-books, and what not, which served to throw light on the domesticity of the past, and to give us some inkling—it can never be more than an inkling—of what the people inhabiting this country before ourselves were like. Not that I disparage the other work, or wish to exclude it, but I wish to lay special stress on the domestic side of our work. It may be a humble feeling, but I suspect it is much more common than is generally supposed, to wish to know exactly what our forefathers were like—what they did, how they lived, what was, so to speak, to use a modern expression, their atmosphere. Very often the old account-books which have been preserved by the care of this Society gave one a better idea of how a Scotsman of the seventeenth or eighteenth century spent his day than all the histories of Scotland that ever were written. That is a cause for which I venture to plead, and I venture to ask those who are in possession of such documents to let the Society have the opportunity of inspecting them with a view to printing them. Documents do not last very long. The ink fades; they become dusty. Handmaids have a tendency to throw them into the fire. I have always thought that our most useful function was in keeping such records in a readable and accessible form. I may be wrong, but I venture to think that we cannot do better work, as a Society for the promotion of Scottish history, than in the humble and unobtrusive task of letting every man know in every degree of life, so far as in us lies and so far as documentary evidence exists, how our forebears lived and worked and carried on the business of their country in their separate spheres. I beg to move the adoption of the report.

Mr. FITZROY BELL seconded the adoption of the report, and the motion was unanimously agreed to.

LORD ROSEBERY next said—Now, ladies and gentlemen, I come to the real business of this meeting, which will not require such a long speech as I have already made to you. There is not a person here, and there is not a person conversant with the work of this Society outside, who does not know the deep debt, the eternal

debt, of gratitude we owe to our Secretary, Mr. Law, who has been the life and soul of the Society. He has acquired documents for us, he has superintended their printing, he has weeded the documents he has chosen, and from day to day and from hour to hour, all through the years the Society has existed, Mr. Law has been its moving spirit. Most of us—some of us at anyrate—I am certain of the President—are mere figureheads of the Society, and the moving spring of all the machinery which has had such a beneficent and useful result has been Mr. Law. Unhappily, the health of Mr. Law has not been all that could be wished, and I think he has shown conspicuously his courage in facing the elements to-day and giving us the pleasure of seeing him amongst us, and enabling us to show him some slight testimony of the universal gratitude that we feel to him. This year it occurred to some of us, and we are grateful to those to whom it occurred, that the present offered a suitable occasion for showing Mr. Law some slight testimony of the esteem and gratitude we feel for him, and the result has been that we have purchased a valuable symbol in the shape of this silver bowl, which will enclose a cheque for £210, which I here put into it, and which has been raised by subscriptions limited to a guinea from members of the Society. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I know it is your wish that I should hand it to Mr. Law with an expression of our devoted gratitude to him for his great and inestimable services to us, and hope that he may be long spared to enjoy it, and that it will recall to him in his quiet retirement the grateful and affectionate sentiments felt for him by the whole of the Scottish History Society.

THE SILVER BOWL bore the following inscription :—‘ Presented, with a purse of two hundred guineas, to THOMAS GRAVES LAW, LL.D., by members of the Scottish History Society, in recognition of his valuable services as Honorary Secretary of the Society from its commencement in February 1886.—28th November 1903.’

MR. LAW, in acknowledging the gift, said—My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen—How am I adequately to express the feelings, with which I am well-nigh overwhelmed, at the sight of this magnificent testimonial. In the first place, let me say that never was I more surprised than when I first heard of what was being done. I had never dreamt of such a thing. The work has been always to me



an absorbing interest and pleasure, and its success has been more than enough reward. And when I read the words of your circular, expressed with such delicacy, tact, and kindness, over the honoured names of Lord Rosebery and Professor Masson, I could only say to myself, This is a day worth living for. If you, ladies and gentlemen, wished to give me, at the close of my career, a supreme gratification and pleasure by thus assuring me, in this generous manner, that my work among you has been appreciated, you have indeed succeeded. It was also a kind and considerate thought to present this welcome gift in so handsome a vessel. The bowl is something tangible to remain behind me, and to be treasured, as it will be, by my wife and family, and by my young son, who even now insists on having his finger in the pie of our Miscellany volume.

An occasion of this kind tempts one to a certain amount of egotistical reflection, and if for a moment I refer to personal reminiscences, I trust I shall not be indiscreet. I was in fact thinking to myself, Is there anything in my work for the Society upon which I can plume myself? Is there any good stroke of business for which I can take credit to myself? And my mind reverted to the first council meetings of the Society, in one of which I found myself in a minority of one. I was instructed to prepare a draft of the constitution. We came to the question who was to be President. Well, there could be no hesitation here—obviously Lord Rosebery.

I must remind you, parenthetically, that the Society originated in a letter from Lord Rosebery to the *Scotsman*, February 1886, pointing out that while many societies were busy in bringing out new editions of old works, there was room for another which should deal more exclusively with the publication of unedited scraps of historic interest. The suggestion was taken up by Bishop Dowden, who said that he and some friends had in contemplation the formation of some such historic society on perhaps a more limited basis; and he generously offered to merge his own scheme in that of the broader one outlined by Lord Rosebery. A General Committee to carry out the project was then formed, under the convenership of the Bishop. It is on this account (I may mention) that by an unwritten law of the Society Bishop Dowden is retained as a permanent member of our Council.

Well, the presidentship being settled, I was about to proceed to the next item on the Agenda, when a chorus of voices arose—



Who are we to have on the right and on the left of Lord Rosebery? Who are to be our Patrons and Patronesses and Vice-Presidents? There was evidently a desire to print at the top of our Prospectus an epitome of the peerage. I protested that this would be to reduce Lord Rosebery to a figurehead. He was to be our President, not because of his rank in the nobility, but because he was the best man for the work. Lord Rosebery knows his countrymen well—no one better; he knows the subject—Scottish History—and he is no stranger to historic research; his words rightly carry the greatest weight, and if he would but consent to be our leader, the Society *must* be a success. A gentleman for whom I had the greatest respect afterwards came to me, and pleaded—pleaded almost pathetically—for at least a Marquis, but I would have no ‘Marquis.’ It was not the coronet we wanted, but the brains, the eloquent and persuasive tongue, the masterful leadership, and the enthusiasm, tempered and made sane with common sense and sound practical wisdom. Ladies and gentlemen, as you see, I ceased to be in a minority of one. May I not take credit to myself here?

But do not let me sail under false colours or give me credit where credit is largely due to others. Where should I have been, for example, without the assistance of my true and constant friend, our honorary treasurer, Mr. Clark, always at my hand with the aid of his wise counsel and experience? Let me mention too the name of one hardly known to any except editors, one of my assistants in the Signet Library, Mr. Alexander Mill, the prince of index-makers. He has burnt much midnight oil in clerical work for the Society, and has practically acted as my clerk. Then I look across the way to those great printing presses of T. and A. Constable in Thistle Street. There is a popular impression that those printing presses are machines into which you chuck a quantity of copy, which emerges as a finished book. I have learned what intelligence and skill are needed behind the machines; and here we have had the benefit not only of the commercial experience of a great firm, but of keen individual interest in all that concerns the production of our volumes. Look at the mere title-pages, which we wisely leave to the artistic taste of Mr. W. B. Laikie. They are, to my mind, typographical masterpieces. I must not forget the Council’s goodness in giving me the aid of Mr. Francis Steuart as assistant secretary. I am indebted to him, too, for much kindness.

Then, ladies and gentlemen, can you wonder, with such a ship and such a crew, and such a captain in command, your humble helmsman finds the greatest pride and pleasure of his life in his post at the wheel? Long life to the Scottish History Society!

Sir THOMAS GIBSON CARMICHAEL moved a vote of thanks to Lord Rosebery for presiding.

Mr. W. B. BLAICKIE seconded, and in doing so said he did not think he had ever heard Lord Rosebery in happier vein than he had been that day, particularly in the words he had addressed to their honorary secretary. He could not allow the opportunity to pass without adding his testimony to what had been said of Mr. Law. There was none of his friends who had known him longer since he came to Edinburgh than he had done, and probably no man had been more intimately thrown into business relation with him. Lord Rosebery had with admirable taste referred to Mr. Law's public record, but only those who had worked with him in private knew what an inspiration Mr. Law had been. His devotion to the aims and work of the Society had been such that no one who had anything to do with Scottish History matters could forget it. Mr. Law communicated to those who worked with him and for him a wealth of enthusiasm, while his unfailing help and encouragement filled them not only with admiration but still more with affection for himself. This little testimonial, though a tangible record which it was satisfactory to see, was a mere nothing in comparison with the services which Mr. Law had rendered. He was glad that Mr. Law's family were present to hear and see how he was loved and honoured, and he was certain that they would ever remember the kindly words which Lord Rosebery had this day spoken of him.

LORD ROSEBERY acknowledged the compliment in a sentence, and the proceedings terminated.













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